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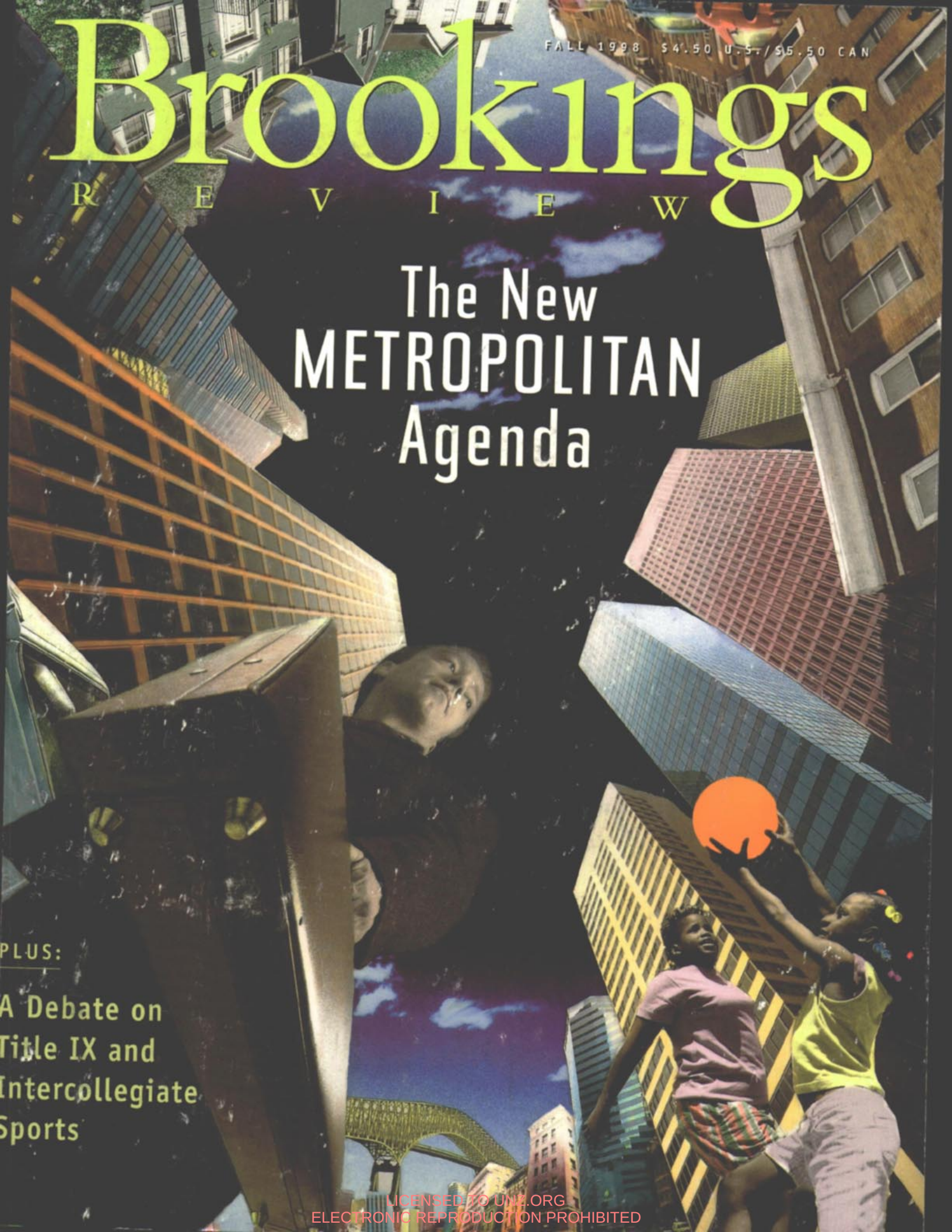
Brookings REVIEW

The New METROPOLITAN Agenda



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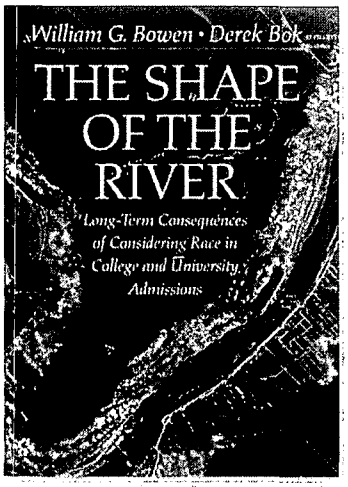

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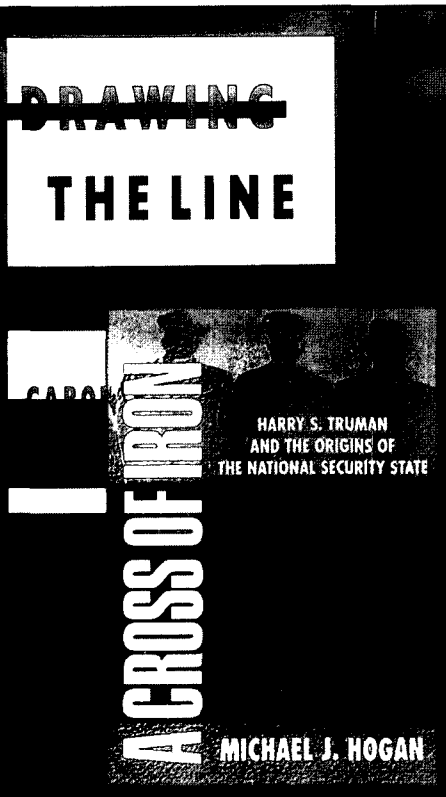

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REVIEW

FALL 1998 VOL. 16 NO. 4

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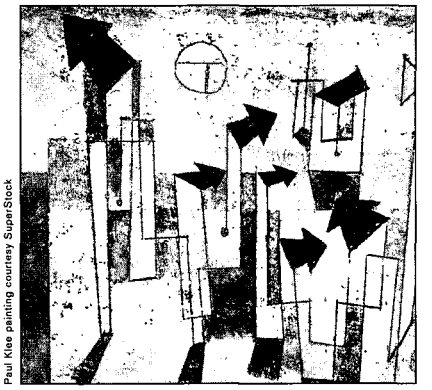

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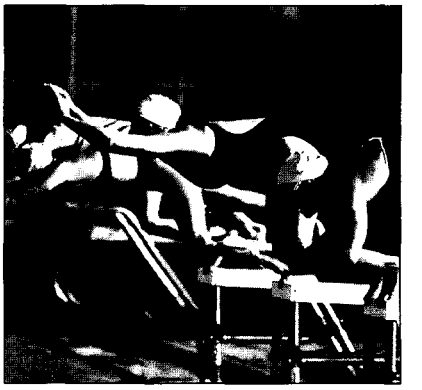

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Design and art direction by Glenn Pierce/The Magazine Group

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Printed in U.S.A.

Subscriptions: one year $17.95 ($24.95 foreign); two years $32.95 ($46.95 foreign); three years $47.95 ($68.95 foreign). (800) 275-1447; (202) 797-6258

Postmaster, send address changes to:

The Brookings Review, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C. USPS I.D. No. 010-099; Publication No. 551640.

Reprint permissions: (202) 797-2843

U.S. newsstand distribution by: Ingram Periodicals Inc. 1117 Heil Quaker Blvd. La Vergne, Tenn. 37086 (800) 627-6247 (ext. 4500)

The Brookings Review (ISSN 0745-1253) is published quarterly by the Brookings Institution Press.

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FOREWORD James A. Johnson

Pollsters tell us that there are two things Americans hate about our metropolitan development patterns: density and sprawl. The history of urban America since World War II has generally been a race from the former toward the latter. Go to any of our nation's major metropolitan areas today and you will witness a similar landscape: explosive development at the outer fringe coupled with slower growth—if not absolute decline—in our older cities and suburbs.

For a long time, academics and a handful of regional thinkers have pointed to some negative consequences of these development patterns: increasingly concentrated poverty in inner-core areas, growing fiscal disparities between older cities and suburbs and new-growth suburbs, worsening traffic congestion, overcrowded schools. In recent years, more powerful players—urban corporate and civic leaders, suburban mayors, organized citizens—have realized the connections between these social and economic challenges and where and how we grow. These leaders are now doing the hard, slow work of building coalitions and pressing for changes in how our nation is developing.

This issue of the *Brookings Review* addresses some aspects of the new interest in metropolitan thinking and solutions that is sweeping the country. This is a movement that is unfolding in metropolitan councils, in state legislatures, in Congress, and, importantly, in corporate boardrooms. I believe the issues described in these pages will be a significant part of the national debate for years to come. ■

James A. Johnson, chairman and CEO of Fannie Mae, is chairman of the board of trustees of the Brookings Institution.

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A CONSIDERED OPINION

Christine Todd Whitman

The Metropolitan Challenge

When I think of metropolitanism, I am reminded of something *National Geographic* magazine wrote about New Jersey. "Once isolated villages have expanded so rapidly that outsiders cannot tell where one ends and the other begins." That sentence was written in 1933, when the state's population was half what it is today.

No matter where you are from, this *National Geographic* description probably comes very close to describing the way suburban sprawl is eating up open space, creating mind-boggling traffic jams, bestowing on us endless strip malls and housing developments, and consuming an ever-increasing share of our resources.

But sprawl—and the ensuing competition for resources between cities and their suburbs—is not inevitable. In states across the country, leaders are homing in on metropolitan solutions that complement the work of mayors, community groups, and civic, religious, and corporate leaders.

Metropolitan solutions can take many forms and come from many levels of government. States are the key to many metropolitan efforts. In New Jersey, we are working on four related areas: land use planning, open space preservation, transportation planning, and urban revitalization.

States set the rules of the game for land use decisions, which are, fundamentally, decisions to sprawl or to build and live differently. In New Jersey, those rules are embodied in our State Plan, which gives priority to development applications that draw on infrastructure already in place. We've given towns a huge incentive: if they commit themselves to channeling development where it makes sense, where there are services that can support that development, the state will give them upfront approval on development applications. I have asked the state property tax commission to make a guidebook to determine the true costs and benefits of a developer's proposal. In this way, we can empower town leaders and citizens to consider the true costs and benefits of proposed development, so that they do not bankrupt themselves making deals for new developments that need expensive, upfront infrastructure investments.

States can also lead the way in protecting farms and open areas. Eleven governors (including myself) emphasized the preservation of open space in their 1998 state of the state speeches. During my first four years as governor of New Jersey, we preserved 115,000 acres. My goal is to add 300,000 more acres of open space and farmland before I leave office in 2002. Our ultimate goal will be to preserve one million acres in the coming decade. I have proposed a new, stable source of state funding to make sure we continue to preserve land beyond my tenure. Several states have put forth bond issues or discussed raising taxes so that they can preserve open space—making, in a way, a down-payment on the quality of life.

A metropolitan agenda must also address transportation. In New Jersey, we have a bold state transportation plan that will expand public transportation, repair highways and bridges, make roads and rails safer, relieve traffic jams, and improve ports. We will pay particular attention to how to better connect our cities with each other and with our suburban areas, so urban residents can more easily gain access to the jobs and opportunities we are creating across the state.

Finally, we must turn our attention to keeping people in the cities and attracting new families and businesses to our urban centers. People have told me that they want good schools, decent places to live, and strong, supportive neighborhoods. To that end, we have established rigorous new academic standards for every public school, increased affordable housing, and begun to encourage urban churches and other faith-based groups to get more involved in such community development efforts as childcare, job training, and housing. We have made significant investments in working directly with neighborhood residents to shape their own revitalization. And new legislation makes it more economically feasible for businesses to turn abandoned industrial sites into productive enterprises.

Smart land use decisions and preservation of open space, better transportation plans and strong cities—these are the elements of a sustainable society, a society in which we protect the resources we have today so they are there tomorrow. Metropolitanism is, ultimately, a way toward this kind of sustainability. The metropolitan agenda can and must become our human agenda. ■

Christine Todd Whitman is governor of New Jersey.

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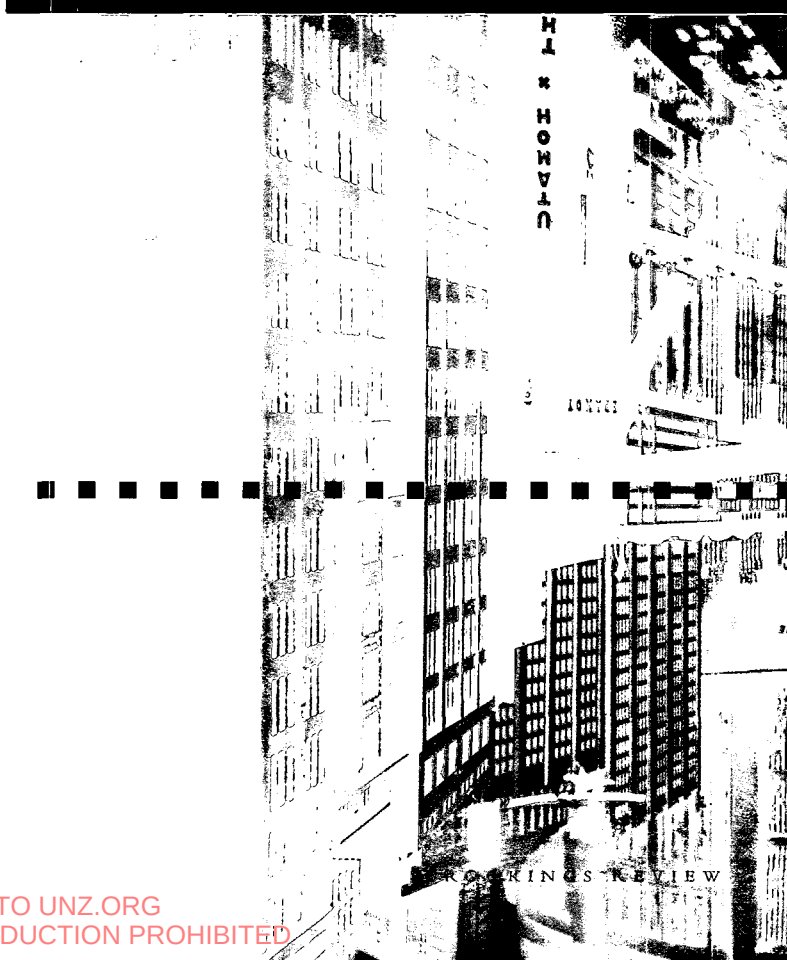
The New METRO Agenda

By Bruce Katz and Scott Ber



Since the mid-1960s, a lonely chorus of scholars and fellow travelers has contended that many of the nation's challenges need to be discussed in a metropolitan context. Metropolitan areas now contain close to 80 percent of the total U.S. population; half the people in this country now live in just 39 metro areas. These areas are the engines of the American economy, competing with other regions around the world as the global economy evolves. They are complex organisms, each growing around several nodes of economic activities—central business districts, "edge cities," industrial areas, services clusters, and high-tech or commercial corridors.

The case for viewing, formulating, and sometimes operating policies from a metropolitan perspective has always been logically compelling, but it has had precious little effect on the way America's domestic policies have been designed and implemented. Americans have been content, for the most part, with a public sector that consists of a fragmented maze of local governments and special districts and a private sector that builds mostly unrelated subdivisions rather than integrated communities.

Increasingly, the political configuration of the typical American metropolis lags behind the economic realities. While hundreds of independent jurisdictions still partition most of our metropolitan areas, their economic activities are borderless. More and more of us traverse multiple municipal boundaries, several times a day. Our local media have a regional reach. Our businesses now depend on metropolitan-wide markets for workers, suppliers, and customers. The natural resources we consume—and often contaminate—do not conform to jurisdictional lines. The civic and cultural institutions we enjoy are assets to the broad urban community and depend on it for support.

Since a burst of city-county consolidations in the 1960s and 1970s, the metropolitan political front has been relatively quiet. *Until now.* In the past few years, metropolitanism has reemerged as a notable political force in dozens of major metropolitan regions—and it is even beginning to alter market practices.

This sudden reemergence has been caused by the growing unease that many Americans feel about how their communities are developing. They are appalled by explosive

Bruce Katz is director of the Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and a senior fellow in the Brookings Economic Studies program. Scott Bernstein is director of the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

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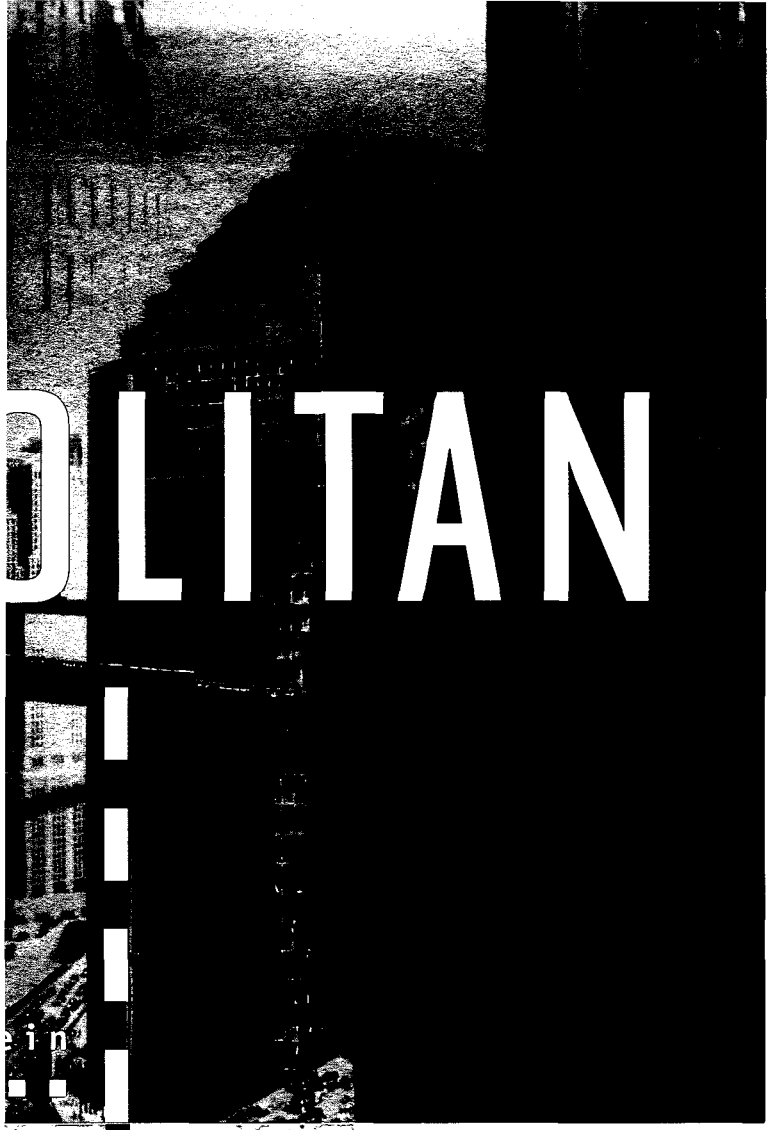

From the film 'Metropolis' by Fritz Lang Photo Courtesy Kobal Collection

Connecting Cities & Suburbs

sprawl into peripheral farmlands and open space, rising suburban traffic congestion, and slower growth or absolute decline in many central cities and older suburbs.

That unease is well founded. Despite the hoopla over "comeback cities," the benefits of the 1990s economic prosperity have not been shared equitably among the parts of each region. Rapidly developing new suburbs—built since the 1970s on the outer fringes of metropolitan areas—are capturing the lion's share of employment and population growth. These jurisdictions enjoy low taxes and high levels of service partly because they limit the development of affordable housing and exclude families with moderate means (particularly racial and ethnic minorities) from living in their neighborhoods or attending their schools.

In many American metropolitan areas, especially in the Northeast and Midwest, central cities and older inner-ring suburbs have been left behind. They have lost millions of residents during the 1990s, particularly middle-class families who are the economic and social backbone of sustainable communities. Consequently, these once-proud places now harbor higher and higher concentrations of the poor, particularly the minority poor, without the fiscal capacity to grapple with the consequences: joblessness, family fragmentation, failing schools, and deteriorating commercial districts.

The costs of peripheral sprawl, moreover, extend beyond fiscal disparities and racial and social separation. All families living in a region are affected as traffic congestion worsens, the price of building new infrastructures and maintaining old ones rises beyond the community's capacity to pay, open space and farmland become less accessible, and, perhaps most troubling, any sense of community disappears.

In metropolitan areas across the country, these changes are creating an impetus for the formation of new, powerful, sometimes-majority coalitions at local and regional levels. Elected officials from cities and inner suburbs; downtown corporate, philanthropic, and civic interests; minority and low-income community representatives; environmentalists; no-growth advocates in the new suburbs; farmers and rural activists; and religious leaders all are realizing that they lose as sprawl accelerates. These constituencies reject the conventional wisdom that current growth patterns are inevitable—the result only of invisible market forces and consumer preferences. Rather, they are focusing more on the role that government policies—spending programs, tax expenditures, and regulatory and administrative actions—play in shaping our communities and, by extension, our lives.

The new coalitions are starting to flex their muscles at all levels of government.

From Chattanooga to Boston to Portland, metropolitan leaders are choosing infrastructure repair, mass transit, and anticongestion strategies over road expansion and more consumption of open space. In fast-growing metropolitan areas like Northern Virginia and Seattle, citizens in outer suburban communities are in a virtual state of revolt over congested roads, overcrowded schools, and loss of open space. They have pushed county governments to curb sprawl by increasing

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developer fees, scaling back existing plans for residential growth, and purchasing land to preserve open space.

Some states are joining the action. In 1997, Maryland enacted "smart growth" laws to steer state road, sewer, and school monies away from open spaces to closer-in areas targeted for concentrated growth. New Jersey is considering an ambitious plan to preserve hundreds of thousands of acres of open land. Minnesota has upgraded metropolitan governance in the Twin Cities area and expanded suburban obligations for affordable housing. Oregon continues to preserve its landmark land use law, which requires urban growth boundaries to be drawn around cities statewide. This year Missouri, Ohio, and Pennsylvania will debate similar reforms.

Even the federal government has gotten into the act. In 1991, Congress passed landmark transportation legislation that gave metropolitan areas the responsibility for devising regional transportation strategies and some of the resources and flexibility necessary to implement them. Significantly, Congress preserved this metropolitan focus when it reauthorized the transportation law earlier this year.

The Purpose of This Issue

The emerging metropolitan agenda has the potential to affect the physical, economic, and social landscape of much of America. It is already influencing our policies, politics, and markets. The essays that follow present a sampling of both the academic and practitioner thinking about the new agenda, as well as an appreciation of the obstacles it faces. These essays do not form a single, coherent vision or plan of action; rather, they present a variety of viewpoints and descriptions concerning the nature and importance of the new metropolitanism. Some of the authors are enthusiastic proponents of "metro-think"; others are opponents; still others raise major concerns without adopting clear pro or con positions.

The emerging metropolitan agenda has the potential to affect the physical, economic, and social landscape of much of America. It is already influencing our policies, politics, and markets.

The first series of articles sets out the policy reforms that the new metropolitan coalitions are seeking at the metropolitan, state, and federal level. Anthony Downs of Brookings provides a concise overview of the costs and benefits of current metropolitan growth patterns based on empirical analysis, as well as extensive review of the academic literature. He discusses in particular the complicated relationship between suburban sprawl and the increasing concentration of minority poor in America's urban cores. Downs outlines the range of general strategies and specific tactics that can reverse these polarizing trends but questions whether these reforms are politically feasible or, if implemented, would make a discernible difference.

Elmer Johnson represents the leadership of the Chicago business community. His contribution is not just a theoretical exercise; he heads the Metropolis Project, an effort by Chicago's business leadership to review regional challenges and opportunities for the coming decades. Johnson contends that a region hoping to thrive in the new economy needs to devise and implement integrated strategies on schools, workforce, welfare, housing, transportation, economic development, and governance.

As Johnson notes, many rules of the growth and equity game are set in state capitals and Washington. States, with their power over land use, welfare, housing, tax policy, and local governance, hold many of the cards for meaningful change. David Rusk, former mayor of Albuquerque and author of the influential *Cities Without Suburbs*, explores what he regards as the primary goal of metropolitanism: altering the land use planning rules under which local governments function. Rusk regards land use reform along the lines of Oregon's landmark growth management law as the vehicle for not only curbing sprawl but also promoting greater equity and opportunity for places and people left behind.

U.S. congressman Earl Blumenauer contends that federal policies should instill a metropolitan perspective into a wide range of programs and policies extending beyond transportation to areas such as water and air quality, housing, and economic revitalization.

Pietro Nivola of Brookings adds a disconcerting set of wrinkles to the policy picture. Nivola compares American and European growth patterns and the disparate demographic, market, and government forces and policies that fuel them. He concludes that metropolitan advocates have overlooked a whole series of national policies (agriculture, taxation, small business, and energy) that differ markedly between the two continents. These could be more critical to changing current growth patterns than many of the other policy reforms on the table.

The Johnson, Rusk, Blumenauer, and Nivola essays taken together point to the richness, but complexity, of the metropolitan agenda. The policies they discuss operate at different levels of government, are administered by separate bureaucracies, cross disciplinary lines, and are subject to major reform. These writers acknowledge that our current growth patterns do not allow for a "big fix"; rather, we should expect reform both to proceed haphazardly—federal change here, state and

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metropolitan actions there—and to require more sophisticated analyses and strategies than now exist.

Among other possible impediments to the success or failure of the new metropolitan coalitions are differences in racial perspectives. john powell, of the University of Minnesota Law School, discusses the complex interplay between race and metropolitanism. On one level, race helps drive the growth patterns that we inherit. On another, race presents a major obstacle to building and sustaining majority coalitions, both because of the attitudes of suburban residents and because of the (often ignored) attitudes of African-American city residents who view metropolitan solutions as a ploy for diluting their power. The implications of powell's work are stark: policy fixes that do not address the complexities of racial politics will either operate on the margin or fail to win majority support.

Peter Gordon and Harry W. Richardson, of the University of Southern California, question the very underpinning of the new metropolitan coalitions, namely that the costs of sprawl decidedly outweigh its benefits. They challenge some of the favored arguments of metropolitan advocates: that sprawl has reduced air and water quality, dramatically worsened congestion, and undermined economic efficiency. If the metropolitan agenda is going to have legs, these critiques need to be answered objectively, empirically, and persuasively.

Janet Rothenberg Pack, a visiting fellow at Brookings, questions whether the metropolitan area is the correct level of analysis and action. Pack argues that larger regional distinctions—Northeast, Midwest, South, and West—may be more important than the intrametropolitan trends at the heart of current metropolitan debates. Her empirical analysis warns against making rigid metropolitan-oriented policies at the federal level and ignoring specific regional characteristics.

Policy reforms of the magnitude being discussed here—concerning state land use, federal spending of all types, and local regulations—do not occur in a vacuum. They require political coalitions that cross spatial, partisan, ideological, and disciplinary lines. By their very nature, coalitions of such breadth and diversity are difficult to build and sustain.

The potential for and impediments to metropolitan coalition building are now being fiercely debated. Myron Orfield, one of the leading metropolitan-oriented state legislators in the country, recounts Minnesota's four-decade experience in pursuing metropolitan governance, tax sharing, and other solutions for the Minneapolis–St. Paul area. During those 40 years, advocates of metropolitanism experimented with the politics of consensus ("we are all in this together") and that of confrontation ("the privileged suburbs should share the benefits of growth"). Although Orfield's experience has been that confrontation is most effective, the question of which approach works best is far from being settled among metropolitan advocates nationwide.

The heavy policy and political focus in this *Review* is warranted, given the impact of government policies on growth and development. Yet growth patterns do not result solely from government policies—and will not be altered solely by changes in them. Citizens "vote with their feet" every day in housing and job markets in response to the failures of cities and other jurisdictions to provide quality schools and services.

The marketplace also has its own internal dynamics. Real estate developer and consultant Christopher Leinberger outlines how the real estate industry has adopted uniform, simplified approaches to building commercial projects and housing subdivisions and how these approaches themselves have contributed to the sprawling environment we live in.

Changing these market practices will require a new way of thinking about the costs and benefits of current growth patterns. Michael Cohen, of the World Bank, argues that neither the government nor the marketplace adequately captures the benefits of reusing existing infrastructure and investing in older communities. He believes both the whole nation and specific regions could realize enormous productivity gains by focusing on improving the existing stock of infrastructure rather than simply (and predictably) building new.

Watch the Metropolitan Space

As the essays in this *Review* illustrate, the metropolitan agenda, like the American metropolis itself, defies easy definition. Unlike many areas of domestic policy, metropolitan initiatives do not conform to traditional partisan or ideological lines. Governor Parris Glendening, a Democrat, pushed through Maryland's metropolitan efforts, and Republican Governor Christine Todd Whitman is spearheading New Jersey's. These state leaders recognize there is substantial common ground between the cities and a good portion of the suburbs on growth and development issues.

The factors precipitating metropolitan action also vary markedly among regions and states. Smart growth in Maryland, land use reform in Oregon, and Florida's planning laws were precipitated by deep popular concern about possible environmental losses. In Michigan, the current growth conversation arises from worries about loss of farmland and open space. In Ohio, several political currents are present: farm preservation, inner suburban decline, and traditional big-city concerns. In Pennsylvania, advocates for reform invoke the state's heritage of small towns and cities, threatened by unsustainable growth. These precipitating factors cannot be manufactured on demand or easily replicated; they reflect the unique natural, demographic, and market characteristics of each region and state. Thus the metropolitan agenda will not develop in a uniform fashion throughout the country.

Finally, metropolitan issues do not invite traditional or simple programmatic responses. There is no "silver bullet" that can be designed and implemented by one level of government or one sector of the economy. To grow differently—to grow in a way that promotes reinvestment and reuse over sprawl, equity and fairness over division, access to opportunity over barriers to mobility—requires the pursuit of integrated public- and private-sector strategies that must be sustained and nurtured over a long time. The effort has an immense way to go, but at least it has begun. As the old billboard advertisements invited us, you would be wise to "watch this space"—it may be coming to your town. ■

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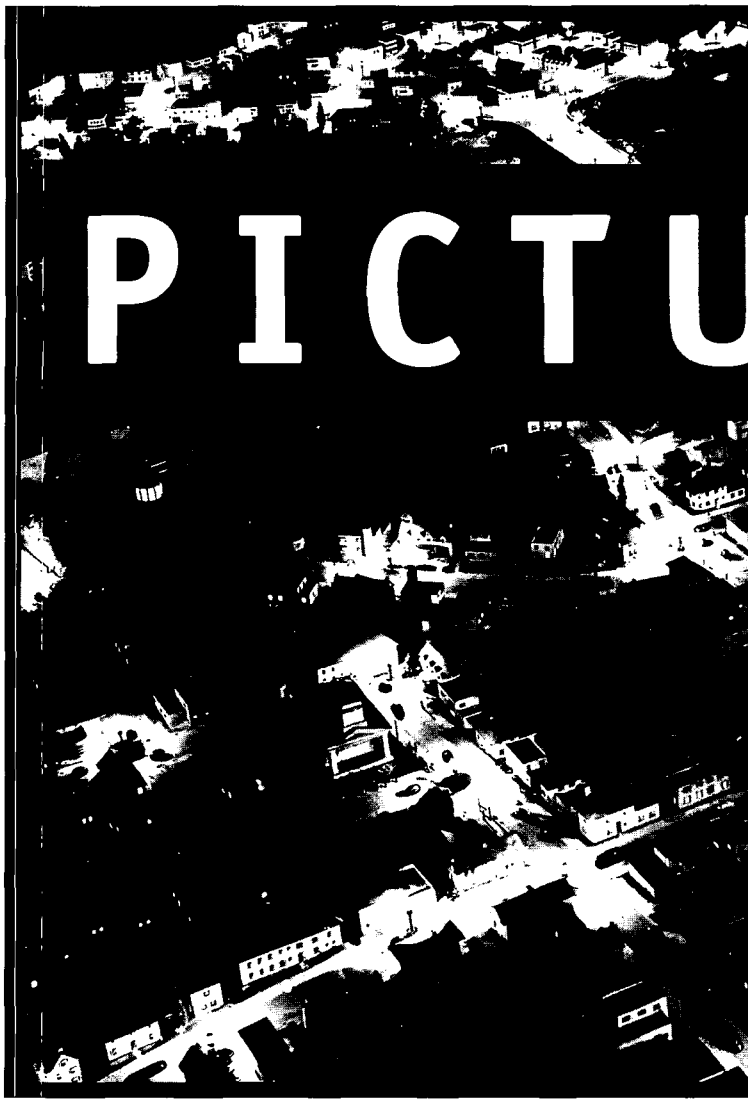
How America's Cities THE BIG PICTU



Suburban sprawl has been the dominant form of metropolitan-area growth in the United States for the past 50 years. This article analyzes the nature of such sprawl, why it occurs in U.S. metropolitan areas, the problems it causes or aggravates, and some alternative possible forms of future metropolitan-area growth.

What Is Suburban Sprawl?

Suburban sprawl is not *any form* of suburban growth, but a *particular form*. The definition I will use was not developed deductively from some coherent underlying concept of "sprawlness." Rather, I looked inductively at all the criticisms of sprawl in the literature and derived those specific traits that seemed most likely to cause them. The 10 traits are

- Unlimited outward extension of new development.
- Low-density residential and commercial settlements, especially in new-growth areas.
- Leapfrog development jumping out beyond established settlements.
- Fragmentation of powers over land use among many small localities.
- Dominance of transportation by private automotive vehicles.
- No centralized planning or control of land uses.
- Widespread strip commercial development.
- Great fiscal disparities among localities.
- Segregation of specialized types of land uses in different zones.
- Reliance mainly on trickle-down to provide housing to low-income households.

Anthony Downs is a senior fellow in the Brookings Economic Studies program. He is the author of New Visions for Metropolitan America *(Brookings, 1994).*

Why Sprawl Has Been So Dominant

Opponents of suburban sprawl are quick to point out its problems and social costs. But they are loathe to admit that sprawl also produces many benefits for large numbers of metropolitan citizens—probably a majority in most regions. Those benefits include low-density residential lifestyles, relatively easy access to open space both at one's own home and in the countryside, a broad choice of places to work and live, relatively short commuting times for most of those who both live and work in the suburbs, ease of movement except in peak periods, the ability of middle- and upper-income households to separate themselves spatially from problems associated with poverty, and their ability to exercise strong influence on their local governments. Persuading those who receive these benefits to support future limits on sprawl will require proving to them that its costs to society as a whole—and therefore to them—outweigh their own gains.

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Are Growing

By Anthony Downs

Photo FPG

Sprawl's Negative Impacts

Suburban sprawl generates, or at least aggravates, two different sets of economic and social problems that reduce the quality of life for millions of Americans.

The first set of problems occurs mainly in fast-growing areas, but spreads to other areas too. It includes traffic congestion, air pollution, large-scale absorption of open space, extensive use of energy for movement, inability to provide adequate infrastructures to accommodate growth because of high costs, inability to locate certain region-serving facilities like new airports that have negative local spillover effects, and suburban labor shortages because of inadequate low-income housing near new jobs. Low-density growth also tempts governments to spend too much of their limited resources on building highly visible new infrastructures rather than on the nearly invisible process of properly maintaining older existing ones. So we finance growth by gradually undermining the sustainability of the existing infrastructure inventory.

All these directly growth-related problems are essentially regional, not purely local. Therefore, purely local growth management policies adopted by individual municipalities cannot succeed without some strong regionwide mechanism for coordinating them.

The second set of problems affects mainly big cities, inner-ring suburbs, and a few outer-ring suburbs. These problems arise because suburban sprawl concentrates poor households, especially poor minority households, in certain high-poverty neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods then suffer from high crime rates, poor-quality public schools, other poor-quality public services, and fiscal resources that are inadequate for the services needed. These problems soon spread to inner-ring suburbs too. And many outer-ring suburbs with low commercial tax bases but a lot of relatively low-cost housing have inadequate taxable resources to pay for decent schools and other services, so they have high tax rates and poor services.

Sprawl and Concentrated Poverty

How sprawl generates directly development-related problems is obvious. How it concentrates poor people within the boundaries of many large cities and inner-ring suburbs and undermines their fiscal strengths is more complex.

Since 1950, some type of peripheral new development around American metropolitan areas has been inevitable because of their tremendous population growth. Cities had to expand outward from the center. Mainly vertical expansion would have required increases in density inconsistent with rising real household incomes and innovations in both transportation and communications.

But the particular form of U.S. peripheral growth has resulted in intensive concentration of very poor households, especially those in minority groups, in the older, more central portions of our metropolitan areas. This development is not inevitable. Similar mainly core-area concentrations of the poor do not arise in either most developed Western European nations or most still-developing nations. They have been caused in the United States by specific policies adopted to produce them.

The first American policy generating core-area poverty concentrations is the requirement that all new housing meet quality standards that are so high that most poor households cannot afford them. Unable to live in newly built housing, very poor people become concentrated in older neighborhoods found mainly toward the central part of each metropolitan area.

A second policy combines fragmented control over land uses in many small outlying municipalities with exclusionary

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zoning and other strategies designed to raise local housing costs. Suburban residents want to exclude poor people from their neighborhoods to protect their housing investments, to maintain their social status, and to isolate themselves spatially from what they see as undesirable traits of low-income households. So suburban behavior is partly responsible for the core-area concentration of the poor, even though most suburbanites claim no connection with central-city problems.

The third cause of inner-core poverty concentrations is racial segregation in housing markets. Repeated and recent studies of realtor and homeowner behavior prove that racial discrimination is still widespread in housing transactions. Reducing racial segregation is hard because even if both whites and blacks desire racially integrated living, the different ways they define it cause almost total segregation to emerge from free choice of locations. African Americans regard a neighborhood containing about half blacks and half whites as desirably integrated, whereas most whites regard desirable integration as involving less than one-third or one-fourth blacks. Given these disparate views, blacks will continue moving into a partly integrated neighborhood beyond the fraction that keeps the neighborhood desirable to whites. That causes other whites to stop moving in, and the inevitable annual turnover in neighborhood residents (about 16–20 percent in most areas) results in more blacks moving in but no more whites doing so. Eventually, the neighborhood becomes almost entirely black—thus racially segregated—even without anyone's explicitly desiring such segregation. Racial segregation against Hispanics is less pervasive but real.

Results of Concentrated Poverty

Core-area poverty concentrations contribute to adverse neighborhood traits that "push" many businesses and middle- and upper-income households of all races—mainly households with children—out of central cities into suburbs. When these firms and households leave core areas, they take their fiscal resources with them. Because our fragmented governance system does not permit core-area cities to tap into most suburban tax bases, core areas are left disproportionately burdened with providing costly services to many poor households. A self-aggravating downward fiscal spiral weakens the ability of core-area governments to provide quality public services and results in grossly unequal environments across our metropolitan areas. Such disparities in the neighborhoods in which children are raised make a mockery of the American ideal of equality of opportunity.

How is this process related to suburban sprawl? In theory, sprawl's specific traits have many roles in producing core-area concentrations of poverty. Unlimited extension into space removes new jobs from accessibility by unemployed inner-core residents; fragmented controls over land uses permit exclusionary zoning policies; and heavy dependence on private vehicles deprives poor people and nondrivers of mobility. However, when I have tried to verify these linkages empirically for 162 large metropolitan areas, most of the 10 traits of sprawl exhibit no statistically significant relationship to measures of urban decline. Even so, I believe the core-area concentration of minority poverty built into the American metropolitan development process aggravates urban decline. But that relationship may be inherent in all forms of American peripheral suburban growth, not just suburban sprawl, or it may be based on just a few of sprawl's basic traits.

Other Growth Strategies

What other forms of metropolitan-area growth might avoid or reduce the problems generated by sprawl? Two possibilities exist. One involves major alternative overall development strategies, the other, specific tactics to overcome sprawl's deficiencies. I will discuss both briefly, defining sprawl as unlimited low-density development.

There are three major alternative development strategies. The first, tightly bounded higher-density development, is typical of many Western European metropolitan areas. It features close-in urban growth boundaries, prohibition of almost all urban development outside them, high-density residential and other development within the boundary, greater stress on public transit for movement, centralized coordination of land use plans drawn up by local governments, and widely scattered new housing for low-income households. This alternative is such a radical change from existing American practices that it is unrealistic to believe that anything like it might even be considered in most U.S. metropolitan areas.

The second strategy, loosely bounded moderate-density development, lies between unlimited sprawl and tightly bounded high-density development. It has a loosely drawn growth boundary, permits some development outside the boundary, raises densities somewhat above sprawl levels, has some increase in public transit and carpooling, has centralized coordination of local land use planning, and provides some new low-income housing in growth areas. This strategy would nevertheless be a very great change from the unconstrained, low-density, auto-oriented growth now prevalent in most U.S. metropolitan areas.

The third strategy is new outlying communities and green spaces. It has a tightly drawn urban growth boundary, can incorporate the other features of either of the other strategies, but permits substantial growth outside the boundary within designated new communities centered on existing outlying towns. This alternative sounds nice but has gained little political support in areas that have actually considered it.

It is obvious that continuation of suburban sprawl will surely not solve the serious problems I have described. In fact, it would make them worse. But it is not theoretically obvious, nor has it been decisively proven in practice, that any of these alternative strategies will largely solve the problems either. In theory, these alternative strategies would at least ameliorate them, as compared to continuing sprawl. Yet the advantages of these strategies have not been powerfully enough demonstrated to the American people to persuade them to give up the advantages they perceive in sprawl.

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Specific Anti-Sprawl Tactics

The other way to attack the problems is with specific tactics aimed at them. The first such tactic is some type of urban growth boundary to limit the outward draining of resources from core areas. This boundary need not be airtight to produce benefits. It should, however, be linked to public provision of key infrastructures, which should not be publicly financed outside the boundary. But no growth boundary will have any significant impact unless strong controls limit growth outside it. Moreover, an urban growth boundary that is the "accidental" sum of many separate boundaries adopted by individual communities is not likely to work. If there are no constraints on development in counties lying just outside the growth boundary, developers will leapfrog into those areas and put new growth there. That will simply accelerate sprawl, as has happened in the Twin Cities and around Toronto. In the San Francisco Bay area, several communities have adopted local growth boundaries and several others are considering doing so. But unless these efforts are coordinated, they will not be effective in solving the problems of the region as a whole.

The second tactic is regional coordination and rationalization of local land use planning, done by some regional planning body, such as the Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities. Relying solely on individual communities to adopt growth management plans without any overall planning or coordination is like relying on a group of subcontractors to build a house with no overall blueprint. Yet very few U.S. metropolitan areas have been willing to adopt this tactic. Local officials universally resist it, because they claim it would reduce their "local sovereignty." In reality, they have no real control—and thus no true sovereignty—concerning growth-related problems, because those problems are all regional, and no purely local policies can solve them.

Experience suggests that communities individually responding to growth-related problems will adopt plans that lock in low density locally. Each locality will try to shift multi-family housing elsewhere to avoid the fiscal burdens such housing loads on to local taxpayers. Each locality will also adopt other exclusionary policies to protect single-family home values and keep poorer people out. These beggar-thy-neighbor plans will force growth either to more outlying areas less hostile to new development or into inner-city areas through illegal overcrowding. As a result, purely localized growth management will cause sprawl to become worse, not better. Growth will then be shifted to more outlying communities when existing ones refuse to permit higher densities.

The third tactic is some form of regional tax-base sharing, with all additions to commercial and industrial tax bases shared among all communities in the region, not just captured by the places where those developments are built. Such tax-base sharing would reduce fiscal disparities among local governments and thereby provide more equal opportunities for citizens across the entire area.

The fourth tactic is regionwide development of housing for low-income households, either by regional vouchers or regional new subsidies or by requiring developers to build a share of affordable housing in each new project. This tactic is controversial, but our society must begin deconcentrating poverty. David Rusk has recently proven that focusing on improving core-area poverty neighborhoods through community development has almost universally failed to prevent such neighborhoods from falling further and further behind the region. Yet most suburbanites who support any policies to ameliorate the problems of concentrated poverty would rather try to upgrade inner-city neighborhoods than help the residents there move into better neighborhoods. They prefer the failed upgrading tactic because it does not require them to face the prospect of accepting more poor residents into their neighborhoods and schools. In the long run, however, such acceptance is probably essential to reducing the serious national problems generated by concentrated inner-core area poverty.

A fifth tactic is regional operation of public transit systems and highways, including new facility construction. Several metropolitan areas have adopted this tactic, although whether their transportation systems produce results superior to those elsewhere has not yet been proven.

A final tactic is vigorous regional enforcement of laws against racial discrimination. Very few American metropolitan areas have carried out this tactic or seem about to do so.

Effectively adopting any of these tactics, or certainly most of them together, would likely require a strong regionwide implementing body. Yet hardly any U.S. metropolitan areas have been willing to consider doing this. Even if all these tactics were adopted, it is not certain that they would overcome the ill effects of core-area concentrations of poverty. The best that can be said is that they have a chance of doing so if they are carried out at a large enough scale over a very long time. Nor is it certain that these tactics would overcome a region's growth-related problems. For example, I am positive that traffic congestion will get worse almost everywhere, no matter what tactics anyone adopts.

Gaining Political Support

Until advocates of limited future sprawl can overcome the metropolitan majority's belief that the benefits of sprawl outweigh its social costs, they are not likely to notably reduce sprawl's dominance. How can they overcome that political resistance? Dealing with this critical issue is beyond the scope of this article. Some discussion of it is presented in the article by Myron Orfield.

Most of the few states that have adopted effective growth management programs have been motivated by some crisis—usually an environmental issue such as new subdivisions disrupting Florida's Everglades. It is neither easy, nor desirable, to generate such crises on demand! Therefore, until more crises occur spontaneously, advocates of checking sprawl will have to grind away at the slow task of educating the majority of citizens who believe sprawl is good that its costs outweigh its benefits, even for them. I hope this article contributes some ammunition for that long struggle. ■

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The View from the Metropolis

Collage by Glenn Pierce

BY ELMER JOHNSON

Metropolitan regions like greater Chicago cover hundreds of square miles, contain scores of independent jurisdictions, and house an enormously varied population. Yet they are bound, as Anthony Downs shows, by an intricate web of interdependencies. Although certain areas of Chicago are thriving and others faltering badly, the long-term prospects for all parts of the region depend on recognizing and taking those interdependencies into account.

Technological advances in transportation and communications have dethroned many central cities, causing the spread of economic activity throughout each region and creating strong competition among regions to attract and retain firms and skilled workers. The city as a single powerful center with corridors of activity radiating out from it has been displaced by an almost centerless network containing many nodes of varying strength, linked by countless channels of movement and communications. This network has a seemingly unlimited tendency to expand outward, leaving many residents of the central city and older suburbs mired in concentrated poverty and racial and social segregation. The continuing outward sprawl of the suburbs means that inner-city residents help underwrite the much more fortunate conditions enjoyed by residents of other parts of the region—residents who exclude most of the poor from their midst.

In 1909, under the guidance of Daniel Burnham, the Commercial Club, one of Chicago's oldest civic and business organizations, produced the Plan of Chicago, written by Burnham and Edward H. Bennet. It is one of the most famous city plans in world history. Today the Commercial Club, under my direction, is about to issue a report urging Chicagoans to grapple with the challenges facing our metropolitan area. We hope that our project will have consequences as far-reaching as that 1909 Commercial Club plan. Our own plan has seven key objectives.

Public Schools. The most serious economic challenge we face is whether we can attain a consistently high level of educational opportunity throughout the region. The city of Chicago has already launched major and promising reforms of its elementary and secondary schools, although the long-range impacts have yet to be seen.

Economic Development. We must establish more public–private sector partnerships to pursue workforce development and job training region-wide and aggressively market our region to foster business location in the inner city.

Transportation. We must develop transportation systems that reduce congestion, improve economic efficiency, reduce environmental harm, and improve the mobility of those who are too old, young, poor, or disabled to drive—without diminishing the convenience of automotive travel. We must also maintain O'Hare Airport as one of the world's premier international hubs.

Housing. We must generate political support for developing affordable housing in the suburbs. Metropolitan Chicago's centers of highest job growth offer almost no affordable housing, though the Gautreaux voucher project

Elmer Johnson is project director of the Metropolis Project of the Commercial Club of Chicago. He is also a partner in the law firm of Kirkland & Ellis.

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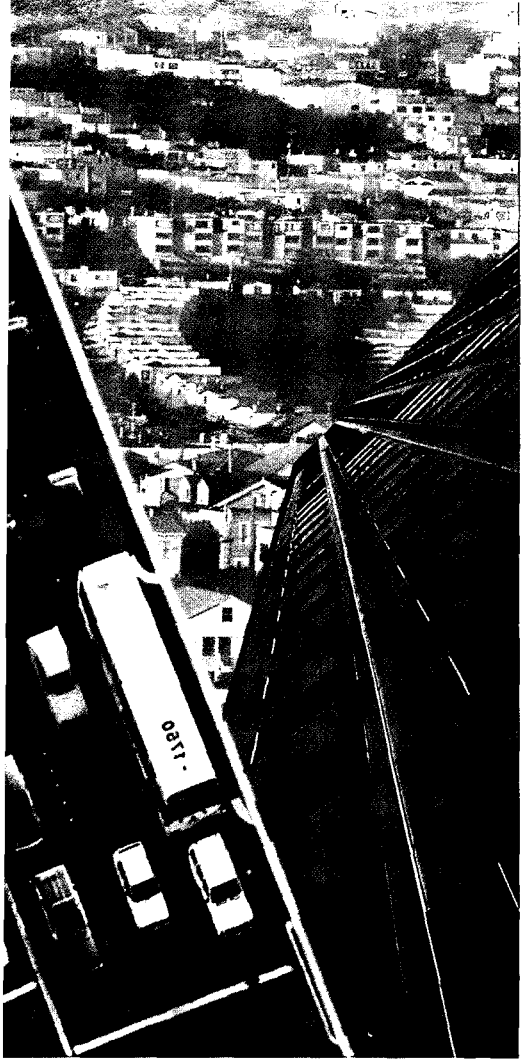

Collage by Glenn Pierce

in Chicago has successfully moved thousands of poor inner-city households to the suburbs without weakening market conditions there.

Sustainable Spatial Growth. We cannot continue to consume vacant land at the current rate without incurring excessive costs for infrastructure to support the resulting sprawl. We must limit outward expansion of new development while fostering infill development and providing incentives to target infrastructure spending in built-up areas.

Taxes. We must push for some type of tax-base sharing, both to equalize funding of public schools and to keep the region's 270 municipalities from engaging in destructive tax-base competition.

Forums for Decisionmaking. We do not have metropolitan government in Chicago, and probably never will, for good reasons. But we must create the political will among fragmented governments to recognize the greater effectiveness of creating some regional bodies with authority to deal with common interests, particularly regionwide infrastructures.

Realizing most of these aspirations will require strong political support from both key officials and major constituencies within each metropolitan area itself and from both the governor and the state legislature. Only the state government can make the legal changes in existing institutions needed to achieve these goals. Existing state laws give splintered municipalities and other units of local government strong incentives to pursue their local objectives without regard to important social interests of the larger region. Local zoning laws and the local property tax system, condoned or established by the state, undergird the powerful bias toward all-powerful localism and against effective regional remedies to problems that are fundamentally regional in nature.

This is an ambitious and controversial agenda. But if a metropolis can realize its interdependence and act accordingly, it will see changes of a sort that today seem all but unimaginable. As Daniel Burnham once declared, "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood." It is a challenge we must take up. ■

The Exploding Metropolis

Why Growth Management Makes Sense

BY DAVID RUSK

America is more than ever a land of metropolitan regions. Today those regions are home to five-sixths of our population and economic activity. But accompanying the explosive growth of U.S. metropolitan regions in the second half of the 20th century, driven by the federal interstate highway system, has been the demise of the central city and the balkanization of local governance.

In 1950, 84 million people lived in 168 U.S. metropolitan areas, typically composed of one large "central city" and its surrounding county. In all, 168 metro areas covered 304 counties and 208,000 square miles. With almost 60 percent of the metro population, 193 central cities dominated urban America. Only 40 percent of the metro population lived in surrounding suburban areas. Central-city dominance was an implicit system of quasi-regional governance.

By 1990, the demographic proportions were reversed. The original 168 metro areas (now with 159 million residents) had sprawled outward to embrace 345,000 square miles in 536 counties. But only one-third of the metro population lived in central cities;

David Rusk, a former mayor of Albuquerque and state legislator in New Mexico, is the author of Inside Game/Outside Game *(Twentieth-Century Fund/Brookings, forthcoming).*

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two-thirds lived in suburbs. Almost 70 percent of the metro population was governed by 9,600 suburban cities, towns, villages, townships, and counties.

Running Hard, But Losing Ground

Annexations and mergers are the traditional tools of municipal expansion, used by even the oldest American cities in their youth. By the mid–20th century, of course, the territorial expansion of cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and New York was history. In fact, throughout New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania the political boundaries of 6,236 cities, boroughs, villages, towns, and townships were set in concrete. On the threshold of accelerated urban sprawl, the Northeast had become a region of "inelastic" cities.

Growing territorial inflexibility also affected much of the Middle West, which, by the Land Act of 1785, had inherited New England's pattern of township government. State laws provided for municipal annexation, but incorporated suburbs already surrounded many cities, such as Detroit and Cleveland.

Throughout the rest of the country, however, at midcentury, central-city officials could reasonably expect that annexation and mergers would continue to protect "elastic" cities' predominance as near-regional governments.

They were wrong. From 1960 to 1990, the 50 most annexation-minded central cities tripled their municipal territory, but saw their share of metropolitan population fall from 60 percent to 43 percent. Over the three decades, only 10 cities (Anchorage, Jacksonville, Nashville, Lexington, Columbus GA, Colorado Springs, San Jose, Huntsville, Bakersfield, and Fresno) increased population share. The interstate highway system decentralized America's metropolitan areas so rapidly and relentlessly that almost no city's annexation or merger efforts kept pace.

Big Boxes and Little Boxes

Though even most highly annexation-oriented cities are slowly losing ground in the face of accelerating urban sprawl, there are strong reasons for continued annexation. By capturing shares of new, middle-class subdivisions, shopping centers, and office and industrial parks, elastic cities maintain greater socioeconomic balance, broader tax bases, and stronger credit ratings than their inelastic counterparts. Minorities are more evenly spread out within "big box" elastic cities than between inelastic central cities and their "little box" suburbs. Big box regions are less racially and economically segregated than little box regions.

In contrast with the 50 elastic cities that tripled their territory, 23 "zero-elastic" cities expanded their city limits by just 3 percent. By 1990, zero-elastic cities' average income had fallen to 66 percent of suburban levels while elastic cities' average income was 91 percent of suburban levels. Zero-elastic cities averaged lower bond ratings (A) than elastic cities (AA). Within the zero-elastic cities' metro areas African Americans were much more segregated (an index of 74, with 0 indicating complete integration, 100 complete segregation) than within the elastic cities' metro areas (an index of 53). School segregation tracked segregated housing patterns in zero-elastic regions (74) while schools (46) were significantly less segregated than neighborhoods (53) in elastic regions. Elastic areas were less economically segregated as well (31 vs. 42).

Despite their advantages, however, even the most elastic central cities cannot hope to maintain their traditional role as quasi-regional governments largely controlling regional development. Annexation strategies have been overwhelmed by the sprawl-inducing impact of the federal interstate highway system and the networks of state highways supporting it. All central cities must turn to forging regional growth management compacts.

The Regional Agenda

Growth management is rapidly emerging as the top regional issue of the next decade. The key center of activity will be state legislatures, where land use rules are controlled.

Only 12 states have enacted statewide growth management laws. They vary in effectiveness from strong (Oregon being the best example) to almost purely exhortatory, such as Georgia's. The two most recent state land use reform laws have been adopted in Maryland (1997) and Tennessee (1998).

Maryland Governor Parris Glendening's Smart Growth Act strengthens a weak state planning law adopted in 1993. The Smart Growth Act does not place new mandates on local planning, which is controlled almost entirely by county governments in Maryland. But it restricts state highway, sewage treatment, and other infrastructure grants (and the federal grants they match) to established urban areas.

Tennessee's new state planning law, the product of a bitter controversy over Tennessee's liberal annexation law, emerged virtually unnoticed by growth management advocates nationally. The Annexation Reform Act requires counties to adopt comprehensive land use plans that must designate urban growth boundaries for existing municipalities (the boundaries will also be cities' 20-year annexation reserve areas). The plans must also set aside rural preservation areas and "planned growth areas" that may allow some "new town" development. Though not as rigorous as Oregon's law, the new Tennessee law has real teeth. Counties that fail to adopt a comprehensive land use plan within 18 months will no longer be eligible for a long list of state infrastructure funds, including federal highway grants.

New Allies for Growth Management Laws

Tennessee's new growth management law may have been born in unique circumstances, but public pressure for anti-sprawl legislation is growing in many states, particularly in the Middle West, where no state has yet adopted a statewide growth management law. New recruits to the legislative struggle—business leaders, church coalitions, inner suburban mayors, and township supervisors—are joining forces with environmental and farmland preservation groups, growth management's traditional advocates. Some key examples:

- A new association of business leadership groups in Pennsylvania, the

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Coalition of Mid-Sized Cities, has targeted enactment of a "Smart Growth," anti-sprawl law as its top priority. Prominent coalition members include Better York, the Lehigh Valley Partnership, the Lancaster Alliance, and the Erie Conference on Community Development. "Public policies that encourage sprawl are neither smart nor right," explains Tom Wolf, owner of a multistate chain of builder supply yards and president of Better York. "We need to change the rules governing land use planning."

- In Missouri a coalition of 80 churches—Protestant and Catholic, black and white, city and inner suburb—is lobbying for a new state growth management law for Greater St. Louis. The Rev. Sylvester Laudermill, chair of Metropolitan Congregations United for St. Louis, explains, "For years our congregations have fought to stabilize and redevelop our communities, but every month more homes are boarded up and more local stores have closed. We've concluded that we cannot win the battle for our neighborhoods—the 'inside game'—unless we also fight and win the 'outside game.'"
- In Ohio the new First Suburbs Consortium (nine suburban communities around Cleveland) is organizing a statewide coalition of "mature suburbs" to support the proposed Agricultural Preservation Act—a state land use planning law like Tennessee's new law, with much broader impact than its title. "Many older suburbs are more vulnerable to sprawl-driven disinvestment than Cleveland itself," explains Dr. Tom Bier, head of housing research at Cleveland State University.

York, St. Louis, and Cleveland share one characteristic: highly fragmented local government. With 72 municipal governments in York County, 105 local governments in metro Cleveland, and 134 local governments just in the Missouri portion of Greater St. Louis, purely voluntary cooperation won't produce meaningful regional plans. As York's Tom Wolf says, changing the rules of the game for land use planning is essential, and only state legislatures can do it.

The Regional Issues That Count

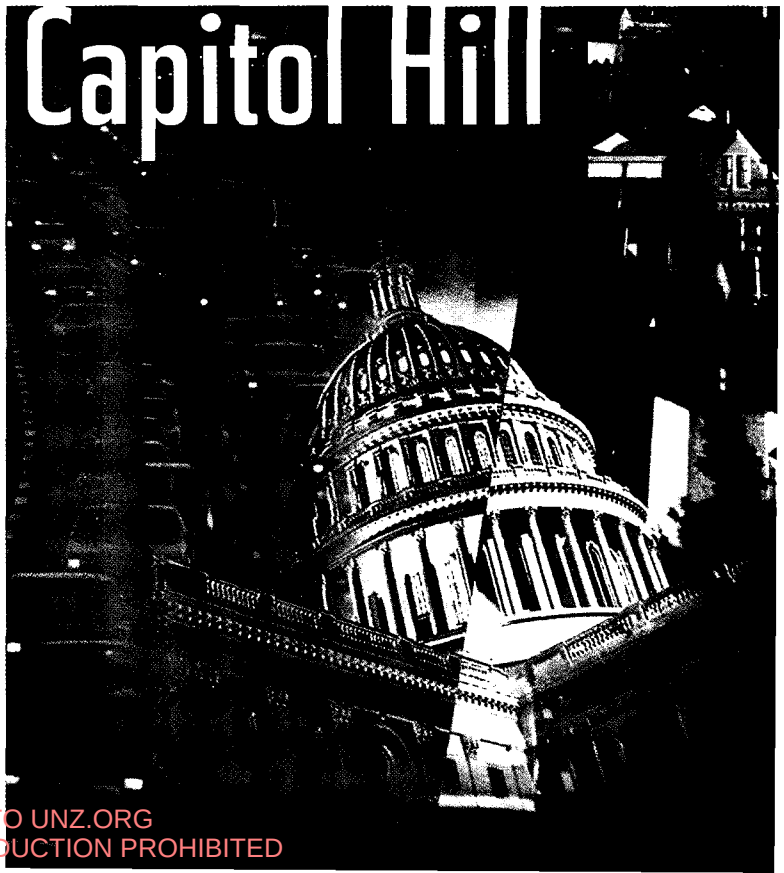
Growing political support for new state land use planning laws will require the evolution of stronger regional planning organizations. In some states federally required Metropolitan Planning Organizations that allocate federal transportation grants are likely to have their planning authority extended into land use planning, housing policy, regional revenue sharing, and economic development policy. And as regional organizations become more operationally significant and the impact of their planning decisions is better understood, public demand may convert some into directly elected rather than appointed bodies.

Even directly elected regional governments, however, will not be unitary governments. (Anchorage is the country's only such example covering an entire metropolitan area.) They will not replace the mosaic of local governments as primary providers of local services. Their powers will be limited but vitally important. Regional land use and transportation planning, affordable housing, fiscal disparities, major regional infrastructure investments—these evolving metropolitan governments will deal with the issues that count for the wealth and health of regions. ■

Collage by Glenn Pierce

The View from Capitol Hill

BY EARL BLUMENAUER



In the past five years, increased attention to the role government policies play in such problems as urban sprawl and central-city deterioration has motivated academics, advocates, administrators, and even, occasionally, federal legislators to focus on how to refashion the policies that have accelerated urban expansion. In today's conservative political climate on Capitol Hill, strategies most likely to prevail are those that reduce costs, promote efficient government, and remove the government subsidies that encourage individuals to move out of the city.

Earl Blumenauer is a member of the U.S. Congress from Portland, Oregon.

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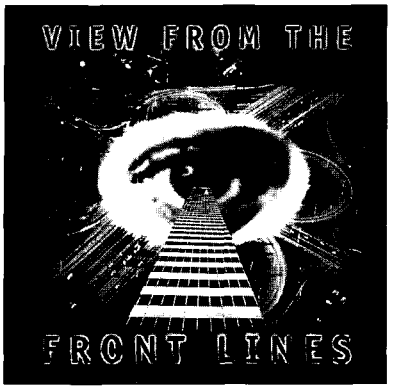

Federal policies profoundly shape individual and local government land use choices, which in turn can create enormous public costs. For example, federal requirements to clean up polluted land sites and purify city water impose huge costs on central-city governments and landowners—costs that are not required for new development on vacant suburban land. This creates a bias against reuse of land in older communities, even though that land is already serviced by infrastructure systems with excess carrying capacity. Similarly, federal tax policy is biased in favor of well-off suburban homeowners who drive to work and against those who choose mass transit. Today employers can offer up to $175 a month worth of parking, tax free, to each employee, while transit benefits over $65 a month are counted as taxable income. The EPA found that even in the central business districts of the largest cities, where transit is available, over half the commuters who drive to work have free employer-provided parking. For a parking space worth $100 a month, the direct federal subsidy is equivalent to free gas for the daily drive to work. Reforming such policies will save federal money and require individuals to make their choices without imposing costs on others.

Congress could also lower public costs by encouraging at least some forms of metropolitan governance. Certain metropolitan issues—notably, water and air quality, species protection, housing, transportation, and economic revitalization—defy jurisdictional boundaries and can be dealt with effectively only on a regional level. Congress has already passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), which required local governments in each region to coordinate plans through a single Metropolitan Planning Organization to qualify for federal funding. By demanding metropolitan regional plans and by allocating money to metropolitan areas, ISTEA made regions pull together. This arrangement was retained in the reauthorized bill just passed, TEA-21.

Other recent efforts to expand metropolitan cooperation have been less successful. A HUD proposal to create grants for communities willing to volunteer to work together on a regional level met bicameral silence in this year's appropriations process on Capitol Hill. Nevertheless, using federal funding to encourage intergovernmental coordination at the regional level is the single best mechanism for cultivating a true regional perspective.

Another approach is to rethink the way the federal government finances projects. To the traditional method of large grants and appropriations matched by a small local contribution (thus essentially providing localities with almost-free money), Washington is considering adding long-term, subsidized loans that would support larger projects with smaller federal outlays. These loans are good for borrowers; over the life of a 30-year loan, a 3 percent rate subsidy is effectively a 30 percent grant. But there are also metropolitan benefits. Requiring repayment forces local governments to look for regional support for their large projects, so those projects must have regional benefits. And projects are much more likely to be economically and technically sound, since local governments will be accountable for performance in ways they never have been before.

One policy area ripe for a regional approach is water cycle management. Today, multiple federal laws and programs—the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Endangered Species Act—have engendered regulations that require massive cleanups in some cities, while allowing other cities and states to shift problems downstream. To take one frustrating example, Portland's sewer agency plans to spend over a billion dollars to eliminate rain-induced sewer overflows into the Willamette River. But there is no guarantee that these plans will make Portland's rivers clean; upstream pollution generated by other communities may continue to counteract the city's best efforts.

Yet another approach is micropolicies—little bills that make metropolitanism's big ideas more accessible. My favorite example is requiring the Postal Service to obey local zoning laws and involve the public when it wants to move out of a downtown area. Members of Congress who would sooner gargle formaldehyde than say the words "land use" are signing onto this bill because they recognize the key role the post office plays in the life of a community.

Another little bill recently adopted as a House Rule will allow members of the House of Representatives to offer their employees in the District of Columbia and in their home congressional districts $21 a month toward a transit pass, to balance the $2,000 worth of free parking annually offered to each of their officemates who drive. Most federal agencies, the Senate, and thousands of private employers already offer this option.

These little bills will not change the world. But, like the other strategies outlined above, they are ways of encouraging a conversation about the healthy development of our nation's metropolitan regions. ■

Federal policies profoundly shape individual and local government land use choices, which in turn can create enormous public costs.

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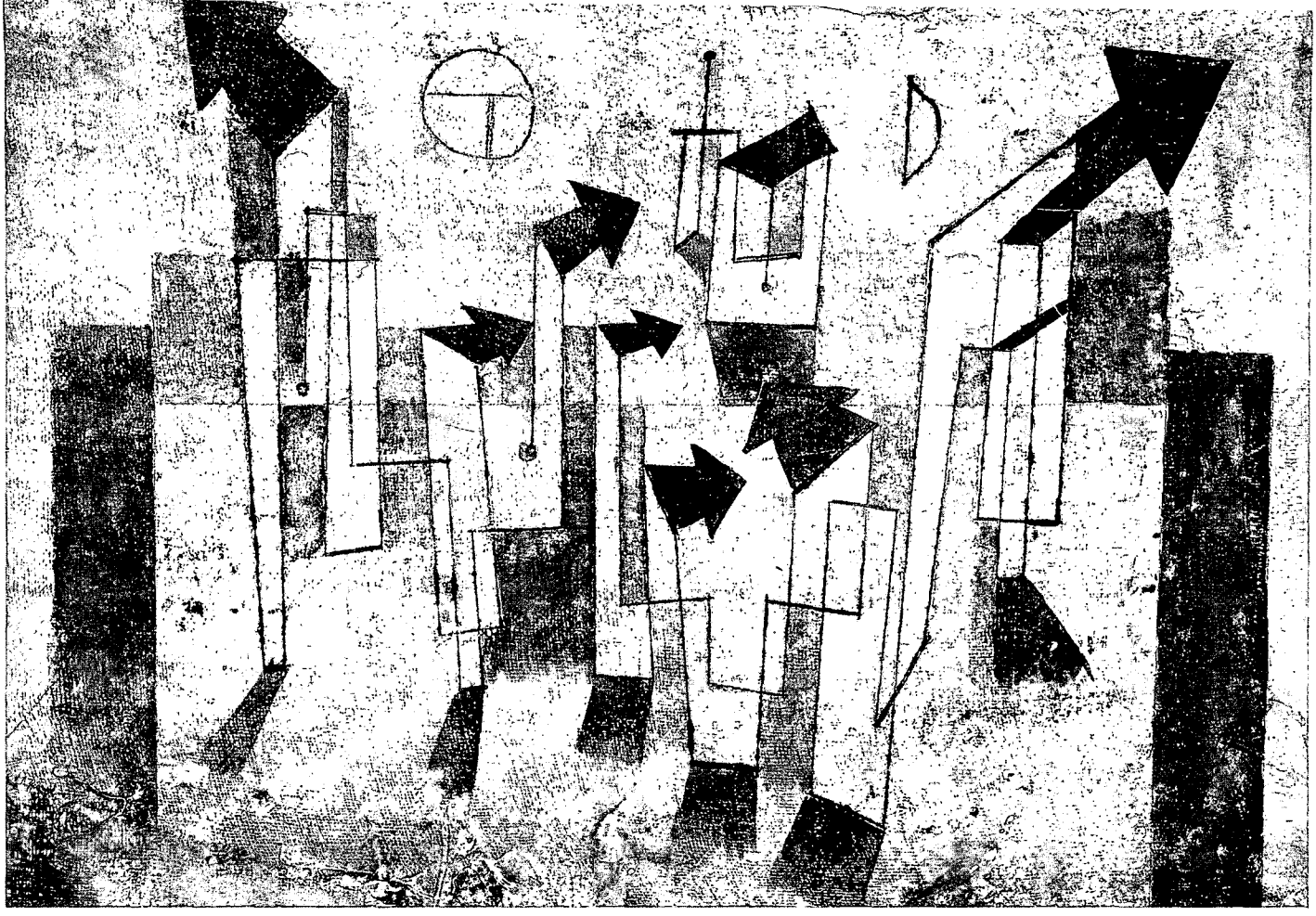

Paul Klee painting courtesy Superstock

fat city

Understanding American Urban Form from a Transatlantic Perspective

BY PIETRO S. NIVOLA

Urban settlements grow in three directions: up into high-rise buildings, in by crowding, or out into the suburbs. Although cities everywhere have developed in each of these ways at various times, nowhere in Europe has the outward dispersal of people and jobs matched the scope of suburbanization in the metropolitan areas of the United States. Here, less than a quarter of the nation's population lived in suburbia in 1950. Now more than 60 percent does. Why have most European cities remained compact compared with the sprawling American metropolis?

Pietro S. Nivola is a senior fellow in the Brookings Governmental Studies program. He is the author of Laws of Unintended Consequences: How Policies Shape the Cityscapes of Europe and America *(Brookings, forthcoming).*

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Misconceptions

At first glance, the answer seems elementary. The urban centers of Europe are older, and the populations of their countries did not increase as rapidly in the postwar period. In addition, stringent national land use laws slowed suburban development, whereas the disjointed jurisdictions in U.S. metropolitan regions encouraged it.

But on closer inspection, this conventional wisdom does not suffice. The contours of most major urban areas in the United States were formed to a great extent by economic and demographic expansion after the Second World War. The same was true in much of Europe, where entire cities were reduced to rubble by the war and had to be rebuilt from the ground up. Consider Germany, the European country whose cities were carpet bombed. Many German cities today are old in name only, and though Germany's population as a whole grew much less quickly than America's after 1950, West German cities experienced formidable economic growth and in-migrations. Yet the metropolitan population density of the United States is still about one-fourth that of Germany. New York, our densest city, has approximately one-third the number of inhabitants per square mile of Frankfurt. Moreover, the dispersed U.S. pattern of development has continued apace even in places where population has increased little or not at all. From 1970 to 1990, the Chicago area's population rose by only 4 percent, but the region's built-up land increased 46 percent. Metropolitan Cleveland's population actually declined by 8 percent, yet 33 percent more of the area's territory was developed.

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Thanks to light taxation of gasoline, the price of automotive fuel in the United States is almost a quarter of what it is in Italy. Is it surprising that Italians live closer to their urban centers, where they can more easily walk to work or rely on public transportation?

Nor can our extreme degree of decentralization necessarily be imputed to the fragmented jurisdictional structure of U.S. metropolitan areas, wherein every suburban town or county presumably has autonomous control over the use of land. Actually, many urban regions in the United States are less fragmented than are those in much of Europe. Since 1950 about half of America's central cities have at least doubled their territory by annexing new suburbs. Houston covered 160 square miles in 1950. By 1980, exercising broad powers to annex its environs, it incorporated 556 square miles. In the same 30-year period, Jacksonville went from being a town of 30 square miles to a regional government enveloping 841 square miles—two-thirds the size of Rhode Island. True, the tri-state region of New York contains some 780 separate localities, some with zoning ordinances that permit only low-density subdivisions. But the urban region of Paris—Île de France—comprises 1,300 municipalities, all of which also have considerable discretion in the consignment of land for development.

The fact that central agencies in countries like France may exert influence on these local decisions through national land use statutes is not an especially telling distinction either. Think of the relationship of U.S. state governments to their local communities as roughly analogous to that of Europe's unitary regimes to their respective local entities. Not only are the governments of some of our states behemoths (New York state's annual expenditures, for example, approximate Sweden's entire national budget), but also a significant number have enacted territorial planning legislation reminiscent of European guidelines. Indeed, from a legal standpoint, local governments in this country are mere "creatures" of the states, which can direct, modify, or even abolish their localities at will. Frequently, European municipalities, with their ancient independent charters, are less subordinated.

Different Strokes

The more interesting contrasts between the formative influences on urban spatial structures in America and Europe lie elsewhere. With three and a half million square miles of territory, the United States has had much more space over which to spread its settlements. And on this vast expanse, the diffusion of decentralizing technologies—motor vehicles, for example—commenced decades earlier than in other industrial countries. (In 1921, 1 in 12 Americans owned an automobile. Germany did not reach that ratio until 1960.) But besides such

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fundamentals, the public agendas here and in key European countries have been miles apart. The important distinctions, moreover, have less to do with differing "urban" programs and land use controls than with other national policies, the consequences of which are less understood.

Lavish agricultural subsidies in Europe, for example, keep more farmers in business and help dissuade them from selling their land to developers. Thanks to light taxation of gasoline, the price of automotive fuel in the United States is almost a quarter of what it is in Italy. Is it surprising that Italians live closer to their urban centers, where they can more easily walk to work or rely on public transportation? (On a per capita basis, residents of Milan make an average of 350 trips a year on public transportation. People in, say, San Diego make an average of 17.) Gasoline is not the only form of energy that is much cheaper in the United States than in Europe. Electric power and furnace fuels are too. The expense of heating the equivalent of an average detached U.S. suburban home, and of operating the gigantic home appliances (such as refrigerators and freezers) that substitute for neighborhood stores in many American residential communities, would be daunting to most households in large parts of Europe.

Systems of taxation make a profound difference. European tax structures bear down on consumption. Why don't most Dutch people and Danes vacate their tight towns and cities where many commuters prefer to ride bicycles, rather than sport-utility vehicles, to work? The sales tax on a new, medium-sized car in The Netherlands is approximately 9 times higher than in the United States; in Denmark, 37 times higher. The U.S. tax code, by contrast, favors spending over saving (the latter is effectively taxed twice) and then provides inducements to purchase particular goods—most notably houses, the mortgage interest on which is deductible. The effect of such provisions is to lead most American families into the suburbs, where spacious dwellings are available and absorb much of the nation's personal savings pool.

Suburban homeownership has been promoted in the United States by more than tax policy. Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration mortgage guarantees are estimated to have financed more than a quarter of all single-family homes built in the postwar period. Meanwhile, in Europe, the housing stocks of many countries were decimated by the war. Governments responded to the emergency by erecting apartment buildings and extending rental subsidies to large segments of the population. America also built a good deal of publicly subsidized rental housing in the postwar years, but chiefly to accommodate the most impoverished city-dwellers. Unlike the relatively mixed income housing complexes scattered around London or Paris, U.S. public housing projects further concentrated the urban poor in the inner cities, turning the likes of South Central Los Angeles or Chicago's South Side into pits of social degradation and violence. The effect was to accelerate the flight of urban middle-class families from the vicinity of these places to safer locations on the metropolitan fringe.

Few forces are more consequential for the shape of cities than are a society's investments in transportation infrastructure. Government at all levels in the United States has committed hundreds of billions to the construction and maintenance of highways, passenger railroads, and transit systems. What counts, however, is not just the magnitude of the commitment, but the *distribution* of the public expenditures among modes of transportation. Where, as in the United States, the share claimed by roads has dwarfed that of alternatives by almost 6 to 1, an unrelenting increase in automobile travel and a steady decline in transit usage, however heavily subsidized, was inevitable.

Dense cities dissipate without relatively intensive use of mass transit. In 1945 transit accounted for approximately 35 percent of urban passenger miles traveled in the United States. By 1994 the figure had dwindled to less than 3 percent—or roughly one-fifth the average in Western Europe. If early on, American transportation planners had followed the British or French budgetary practice of allocating between 40 and 60 percent of their transport outlays to passenger railroads and mass transit systems, instead of 73 percent for highways as in the U.S. case, there is little question that many U.S. cities would be more compressed today.

Dense cities also require a vibrant economy of neighborhood shops and services. (Why live in town if performing life's simplest everyday functions, like picking up fresh groceries for supper, requires driving to distant vendors?) But the local shopkeepers cannot compete with regional megastores proliferating in America's metropolitan shopping centers and strip malls. Multiple restrictions on the penetration and pricing practices of large retailers in various European countries protect small urban businesses. The costs to consumers are high, but the convenience and intimacy of London's "high streets" or of the corner markets in virtually every Parisian *arrondissement* are preserved.

For Richer or for Poorer?

To conclude that a wide range of public policies in Europe has helped curb suburban sprawl there is not to say, of course, that all those policies have enhanced the welfare of the Europeans—and hence, that the United States ought to emulate them. Most households are not better off when farmers are heavily subsidized, or when anticompetitive practices protect micro-businesses at the expense of larger, more efficient firms. Nor would most consumers gain greater satisfaction from housing strategies that assist renter occupancy but not homeownership, or from tax and transportation policies that force more people out of their cars and onto buses, trains, or bicycles. Arguably, the economies of some nations in Western Europe have faltered in recent years amid these sorts of public biases, while the United States has prospered in part because it has successfully resisted them.

Still, if we wonder why the cityscapes of America and Europe typically look so different, we would do well to get beyond clichés (about underfunded U.S. urban programs, inadequate U.S. land use planning, or "balkanized" U.S. metropolitan governments) and to recognize the full breadth of hard policy choices that make for international differences. ■

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RACE SPACE

What Really Drives Metropolitan Growth

I recently met with a high-ranking administrator in a large, predominantly African-American city to discuss the problems that cities like his face, from failing school systems, depopulation, and business and job loss to the suburbs, to a housing crisis marked by boarded-up houses and vacant lots. I suggested to the administrator, whom I will call Dr. Jones, that one of the problems facing central cities and older-ring suburbs is the constant pulling of resources away from the region's core and the deployment of these resources to the outer edges of the metropolitan area, or put succinctly, sprawl. Dr. Jones agreed and added that sprawl can be fully understood only in racial terms: the developing outer-ring is always upper middle class and white.

I asserted that the city and older suburbs must find a way to coordinate and develop a regional strategy to benefit from the resources that are spread unevenly throughout the region, reverse the trend of fragmentation or isolationism amongst municipalities, and halt the pull of resources. The idea of coordinating with the suburbs disturbed Dr. Jones: "White people in the suburbs are hostile to the city largely because the city is black. They will only work with the city if they think they can take it over. They are racist, I don't trust them, and I won't work with them."

I tried to assure Dr. Jones that my suggestion was not based on naive trust and that I, too, was aware that regionalism had often been used to the detriment of the people of color living in the central cities. And while this issue must be addressed, a nonregional solution for the problems facing the urban core is not a solution at all. Unfortunately, our discussion was cut short. This article is written in continuation of the spirit of our discussion.

Race has been a major factor in the spatial configuration of our metropolitan areas. The outer-ring suburbs of metropolitan areas are overwhelmingly white (although recently minorities, and in particular middle-class blacks, have participated in the move to the suburbs), and the inner cities are populated largely by people of color, especially blacks. This spatial and racial pattern makes sharing or fairly distributing regional benefits almost impossible. White suburbanites resist regional strategies, reluctant to embrace something that will have negative economic consequences for them—which is rational, albeit shortsighted. Blacks also resist regional solutions because they fear a loss of cultural control or identity and a loss of political power.

Ignoring these claims from the minority community is a serious mistake. Doing so makes a regional solution into just one more solution imposed by whites on people of color. Given the history of white and nonwhite relations in this country, particularly around the development of sprawl and metropolitan fragmentation, this is simply untenable. At a

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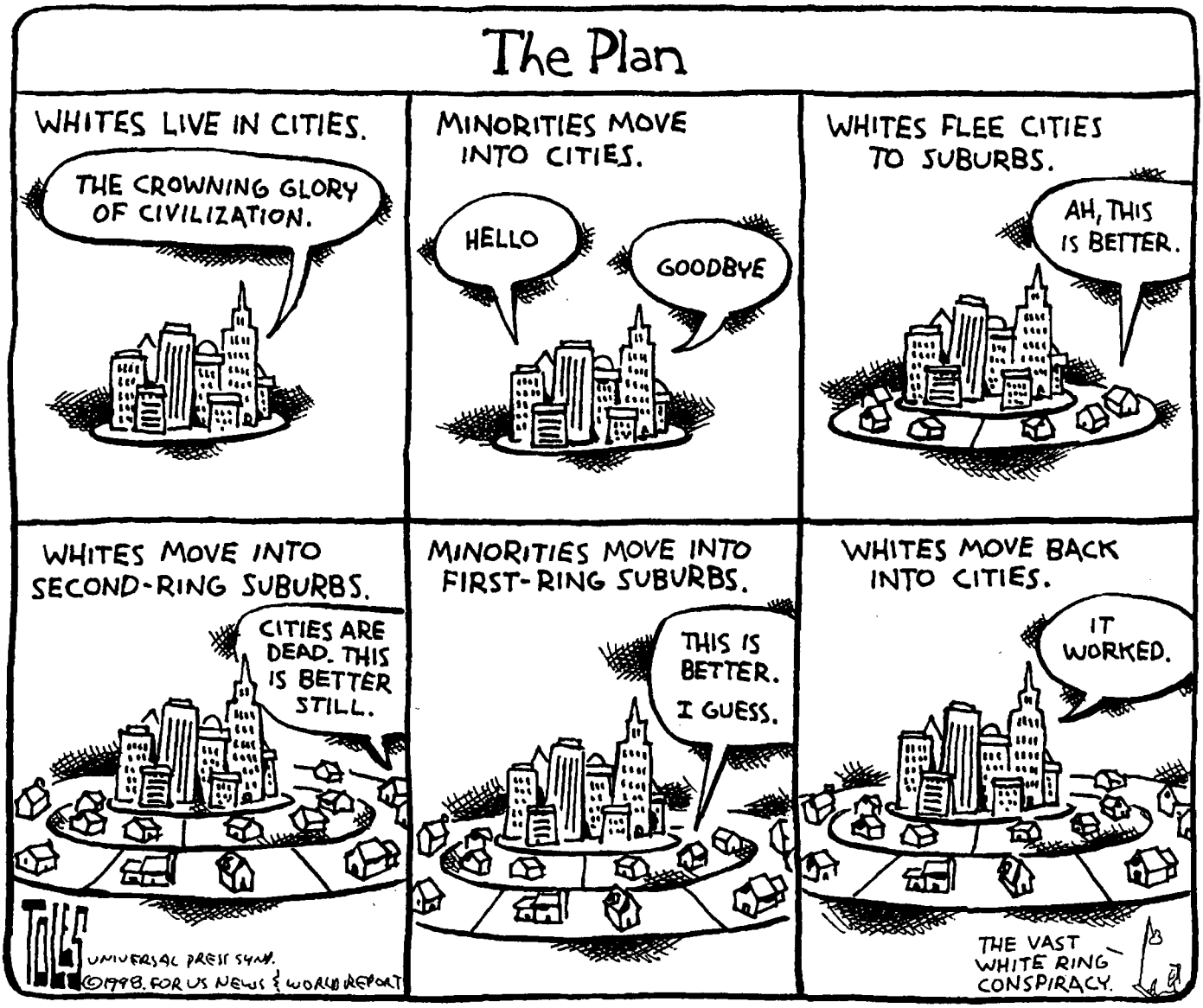
more practical level, in regions with a substantial minority population, regional approaches that do not engage the minority community will have difficulty gaining the necessary support. But regional solutions are, I think, imperative, because a number of important inner-city problems are caused by regional forces, and thus can be adequately addressed only at the regional level. A failure to address central-city problems affects the entire region adversely. The failure to adopt regional strategies adversely affects the central cities.

We need a regional approach that gives cities or communities a way to maintain appropriate control of their political and cultural institutions, while sharing in regional resources and balancing regional policymaking. We need an approach that avoids both the myopia of local, fragmented governance and the blunt regionalism exercised by an overarching unit of government, such as a county or state, that can suffocate local governments.

The Metropolitan Area in Black and White

The economic and political isolation of poor minorities in the inner cities is caused by flight, or sprawl, and fragmentation. The movement further away from the central cities to the suburbs is sprawl. The effect of the creation of rigid boundaries, which separate municipalities from each other and more importantly from the central core, is fragmentation. As a result of these forces, minorities find themselves in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, where four out of ten of their neighbors (or they themselves) are poor. Of the more than 8.2 million people who live in these areas, more than half are black, a quarter are Hispanic.

The residential segregation and concentration of poverty in neighborhoods inhabited by blacks did not come about accidentally. It was constructed and is perpetuated through governmental housing and transportation policies, institutional practices, and private behaviors. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Federal Housing Administration pursued an explicit policy against granting mortgages for homes in minority or integrated neighborhoods and preferred to back new construction rather than the purchase of existing units. Essentially, the FHA paid whites to leave the central cities and confined blacks to



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the central cities, which were, in turn, divested by the federal government and private capital. The national highways facilitated exit from the central city and destabilized many urban neighborhoods. "Urban renewal" efforts destroyed stable black neighborhoods. Local governments have also contributed to the problems of segregation and concentrated poverty through the ongoing practice of exclusionary zoning (requiring large minimum lot sizes or banning multifamily housing), which makes it nearly impossible for poor families to find affordable housing in white suburban communities. Similar private measures have included but are not limited to the practice of blockbusting by the real estate profession and the creation of racially restrictive covenants by homeowners.

The concentrated poverty that these kinds of policies create is usually ruinous to people's life chances. High levels of crime, drug use, and other social pathologies emerge and become self-perpetuating. In addition to this poor quality of life, residents experience severely limited social and economic opportunities. The quality of schools, housing, and municipal services and the availability of transportation and employment are undermined.

When one part of the region becomes dysfunctional, the entire area is compromised. This is what is happening with the inner cities and older suburbs—their difficulties are negatively affecting entire regions. Among other things, a poor and racially segregated urban core harms the reputation of the metropolitan region as a whole and makes it less inviting to international, national, and local businesses as well as families looking for homes.

But white suburbanites have traditionally resisted claims like these that tie them to the inner city. The justification for this resistance changes over time. The current justification is that the "culture of poverty" found in the inner cities will infiltrate protected suburban enclaves—a justification that is simply a new name for a long-standing racism directed toward the central cities.

White segregationism, or resistance to regionalism, manifests itself in the support of in-place strategies. Such strategies attempt to move resources and opportunities to low-income central-city residents and to generate improvements in urban neighborhoods of color, as opposed to mobility-oriented schemes, which aim to disperse central-city residents to existing opportunities. Whites want to keep minorities "immobile" and out of their suburban neighborhoods.

In-place strategies frequently receive support from minorities as well, though for different reasons. One motivation is the preservation of cultural identity. As Cornel West and others have argued, deconcentration of minorities can result in both assimilation of minorities who are pocketed in more affluent areas and dilution of culture in predominantly black areas.

Minorities also fear the erosion of political power and the loss of control over the political process if the political base of their communities diminishes or the minority population is dispersed throughout the region. Minorities would often rather retain this control even if opportunity structures are lacking in their communities. Political power is actually a very complex issue. On the one hand, the geographic concentration of minorities does not guarantee their political cohesion, nor, given the challenges to majority-minority legislative districts, does it guarantee the election of minority candidates. Even if minority candidates do win office, they are likely to be isolated in the legislature. But, on the other hand, mobility and the resulting dispersion of blacks throughout a metropolitan area may generate a backlash in some places, reducing black political power. There is evidence of a white backlash against black interests when the black population rises above 30 percent of a voting district. While a mobility strategy seems to be a better choice for the creation and maintenance of economic power for communities of color, it is likely to undermine political power.

Federated Regionalism

A federated approach recognizes the regional nature of racial and economic segregation and provides a solution that integrates regional policymaking with local governance. An example is tax-base sharing, which, as practiced in Minnesota's Twin Cities, distributes the regional tax base according to regional needs without compromising local interests. Each city is allocated a certain share of the regional tax base but controls the tax rate for its residents, thereby maintaining authority and discretion over local issues. Another example is Portland's regional housing strategy. There, the regional governing body sets requirements for affordable housing, but municipalities maintain responsibility for zoning and how they choose to meet their share of the regional housing need.

While strategies of federated regionalism such as those noted above can provide a balance between local governance and regional concerns, not all federated strategies strike that balance. Those that fail to do so can actually perpetuate regional fragmentation. An example is Indianapolis's Uni-Gov, which made regional many areas of governance but left the schools under existing local segregated boundaries. The ideal balance between "local" and "federated" must be responsive to concerns of communities of color and the problems of concentrated poverty. It is critical that racial minorities participate in the effort to strike that balance.

Minorities have cause to be wary of regional solutions to the problems of segregation and concentrated poverty. What little political power they wield seems at risk of dilution if regionalism further fragments their communities. In searching for regional strategies, we must steer between two extremes. One is to be so jealous of local control as to preserve political and cultural control, but in areas that are isolated and starved of economic resources. The other extreme is a regionalism that offers access to resources at the cost of a stifled political voice and cultural assimilation or marginalization. We need a metropolitan approach that addresses both the economic and concentrated-poverty issues of the central core while respecting the right to effective participation in political and cultural institutions.

Tensions between local concerns and the needs of the whole metropolitan region are healthy. Structuring these tensions in a way that leads to true democratic cooperation in metropolitan planning—cooperation that transcends racial polarization—is the challenge. ■

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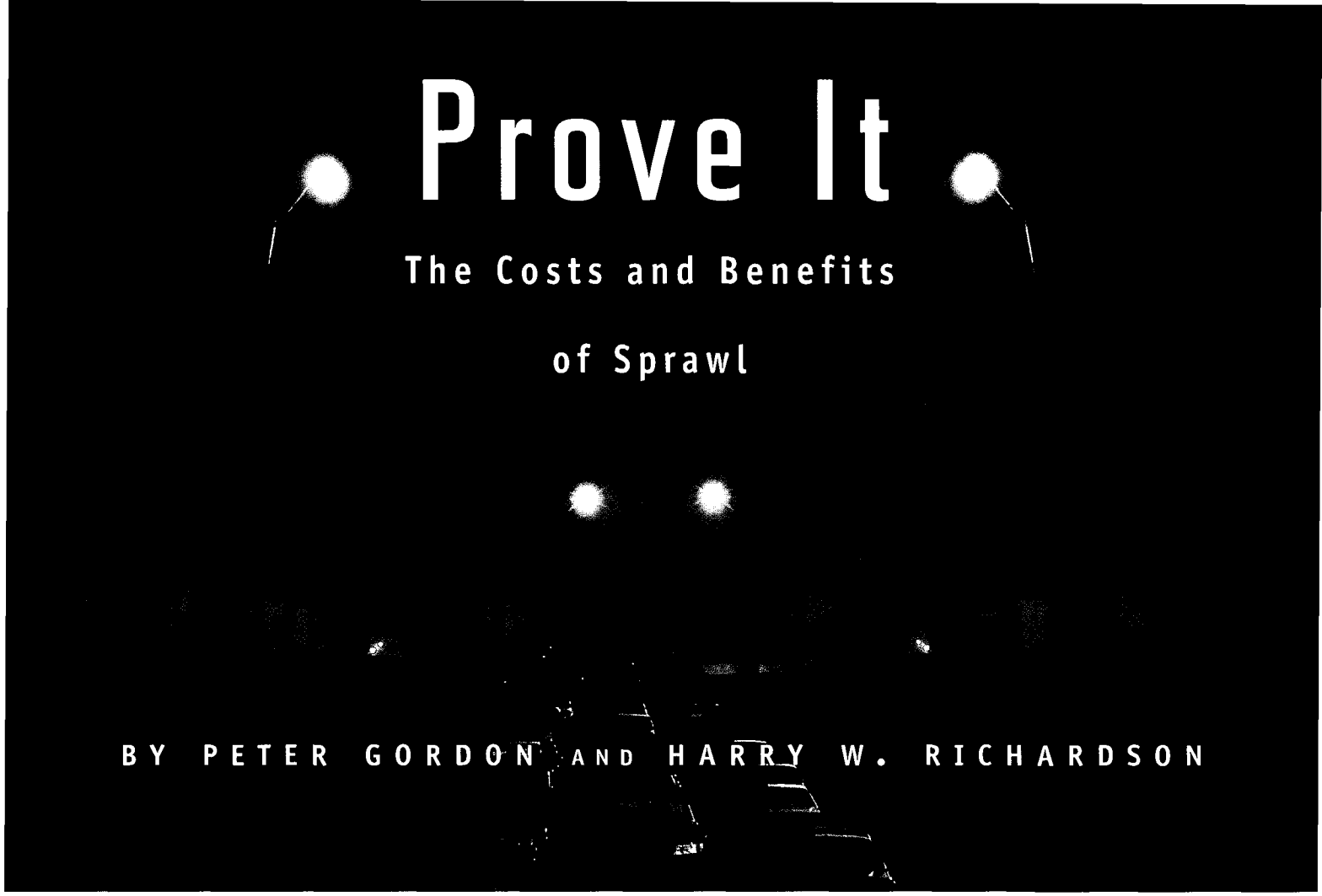
Prove It

The Costs and Benefits of Sprawl



BY PETER GORDON AND HARRY W. RICHARDSON

Collage by Glenn Pierce

Cities have been generating suburbs for as long as records have existed. Most of the world's large cities are growing outward now, and very likely the pace will accelerate in the new age of information networking. Unpopular as the word is in some quarters, it is hard to avoid concluding that "sprawl" is most people's preferred life-style. Because no one wants to appear to contradict popular choices and interfere with the principle of consumer sovereignty, the critics of sprawl instead blame distorted prices, such as automobile subsidies and mortgage interest deductions, and claimed but unregistered costs of sprawl, such as unpaid-for infrastructure, lost agricultural output, congestion, and dirty air.

The cost position, however, is encumbered with at least two problems. First, most of us are not cost minimizers. Rather, we trade off costs for perceived benefits. And second, the costs argument is empirically shaky. Traffic "doomsday" forecasts, for example, have gone the way of most other dire predictions. Why? Because suburbanization has turned out to be the traffic safety valve. Increasingly footloose industry has followed workers into the suburbs and exurban areas, and most commuting now takes place suburb-to-suburb on faster, less crowded roads. The last three surveys by the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS) show increasing average work trip speeds—28 mph in 1983, 32.3 mph in 1990, and 33.6 mph in 1995.

The alleged loss of prime farmlands is, in the words of the late Julian Simon, "the most conclusively discredited environmental-political fraud of recent times." U.S. cropland use peaked in 1930. Each year American farmers grow *more* crops using *less* land and labor.

As for the "compactness equals efficiency" argument, technological change takes us in the direction of efficient small-scale provision, weakening the old idea that scale economies of utility generation are there to be exploited by more compact urban forms. Large retail establishments, for example, can now keep low-kilowatt natural gas turbines on the premises.

U.S. public policies do not have a singular spatial thrust. Some policies, such as subsidized downtown renewal, subsidized and downtown-focused transit, subsidized downtown convention centers,

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sports stadia, and similar facilities, favor centralized settlement. Others, including inflexible zoning codes and the deductibility of mortgage interest and real estate property tax, favor dispersal.

The much vaunted subsidies to the auto-highway system consist mainly of decisions by government policymakers not to tax drivers to recover the cost of such externalities as congestion and environmental damage. And that issue recedes in importance as highway speeds increase and internal combustion engines become cleaner. The mortgage interest tax deduction raises land values throughout the metropolitan region. It has contributed much less to central-city decline than have suburban minimum lot size restrictions and poorer central-city amenities. In any event, reducing subsidies makes more sense than equalizing them, as, for example, through trying to equate automobile and transit subsidies.

The evidence that has been assembled on the difficult issue of infrastructure services costs is, at best, mixed. Even if it could be conclusively demonstrated that suburban and exurban infrastructure costs are higher than central-city costs, the solution is not to ban suburbanization and low-density development or introduce strict growth management controls. A better approach is to use developer impact fees (fees per residential unit imposed on new development) to recoup any difference between the fiscal costs and revenues from residential development.

The Need for Clarity

The sprawl discussion is distorted by a high degree of misinformation. To take one example, state and local growth management, "smart growth," and anti-sprawl protagonists frequently cite Los Angeles as the sprawl capital of the United States, with a land use pattern to be avoided at all costs. In fact, the urbanized area of the Los Angeles metropolitan region has the highest residential densities in the United States—higher even than the New York urbanized region—largely the result of its high land prices.

Casual observers have been deceived by looking at only the gross densities based on all the land area, much of which consists of vast unbuildable areas such as mountains and peripheral deserts. Another false conception is that suburban areas are dominated by single-family homes on large lots. In fact, the suburban and exurban "attached house" share of the metropolitan housing stock is about 50 percent. Of the nation's presumably higher-density attached housing, then, half is located outside central cities.

Increasingly, the attack on sprawl is being justified by the need to achieve the goal of "sustainable urbanization." But no one has defined the term satisfactorily. Rather, the talk is of recycling, increasing densities, and promoting transit as instruments for preserving resources for future use. The concern for future generations that sustainability implies gives insufficient weight to today's problems of poverty and inequality. In the words of Nobel Prize–winning economist Robert Solow, "There is at least as strong a case for reducing contemporary inequality (and probably stronger) as for worrying about the uncertain status of future generations." In our view, these problems cannot be alleviated significantly via the social engineering of urban space.

Some observers see compact and high-rise development as an accommodation to inferior forms of transportation that have been eclipsed by the automobile. The universal choice is for the freedom and flexibility that come only with personal transportation. Collective transportation loses in any head-to-head contest, as the widespread operations of large numbers of clandestine "gypsy" cabs and vans above one of the world's premier subway systems in New York City make clear. Even in New York, many origins and destinations are too dispersed to be serviced by fixed-route systems. The record of conventional transit throughout the United States is the same theme writ large. After hundreds of billions of dollars of public subsidy, transit use per capita is now at a historic low. The evolution of American cities and life-styles has outgrown 19th-century-style urban transit. Ironically, the mass transit favored by anti-sprawl activists—street cars, subways, and urban rail systems of earlier days—was the prime instrument of suburbanization. The automobile merely diversified its radial pattern.

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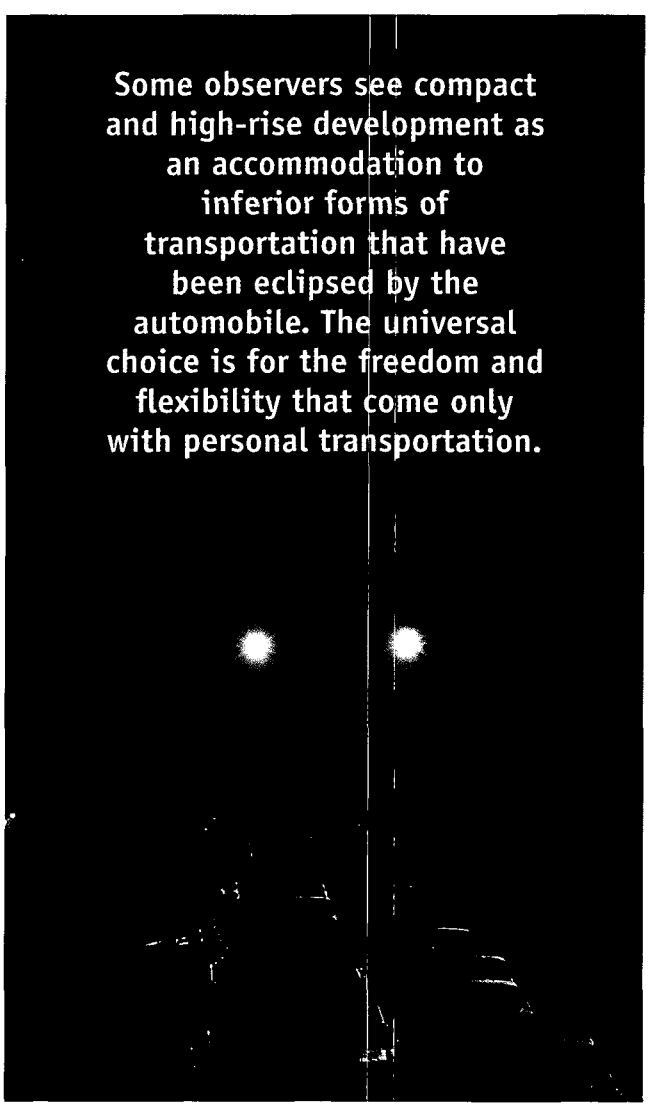

And though mass transit supporters argue for higher densi-

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ties to reduce congestion and improve air quality, in fact the relationship between density and traffic congestion is positive rather than negative, and the link between congestion and air quality is very complex and highly technical.

In the end, the goals of the anti-sprawl position are unattainable. Opportunities for infill development in central cities exist, but they are limited. There is a small, if growing, scattering of compact new developments in the suburban and, more often, exurban environments, but their impact on anti-sprawl goals is minimal. There is, for example, no evidence that they reduce off-site trips. Any reasonable assumptions about the extent of future compact developments must yield the conclusion that their influence on tomorrow's urban landscape is minuscule.

Proponents of the New Urbanism claim the ability to design community-friendly neighborhoods, thus joining the movement to revive communitarianism. While there is a lively debate over the current state of civil society (as the contributors to this *Review's* fall 1997 issue make clear), the case of the New Urbanists is much less clear. Residential developments and whole neighborhoods are being supplied by market-savvy builders attentive to the trade-offs that their customers are eager to make. People in compact communities live as privately as those in low-density suburbs. Were people to demand cozier spatial arrangements, they would soon get them. Moreover, the public's demand for "community" is being met in other ways, facilitated by the auto and even Internet access. In terms of transportation, we know that the overwhelming amount of travel is nonwork travel. About one-fifth of person-trips are for work-related purposes, one-fifth are for shopping, and three-fifths are for "social" reasons (including the NPTS categories "other family and personal business," "school/church," "visit friends or relatives," and "other social or recreational" purposes).

Photodisc

The goals of the anti-sprawl position are unattainable. Opportunities for infill development in central cities exist, but they are limited. There is a small, if growing, scattering of compact new developments in the suburban and, more often, exurban environments, but their impact on anti-sprawl goals is minimal.

Dealing with the Costs of Sprawl

We are not advocating a "laissez-faire" approach to the development of our cities. Cities are, almost by definition, the cause of myriad unintended costs. Many problems (not all) can, and should, be resolved by low-cost negotiation between the affected parties (for example, developers and environmentalists) or by the exchange of expanded property rights (using such measures as emission fees, congestion prices, and development credits). The more radical measures proposed by critics of American cities—maximum densities, restrictions on automobile use, and mandatory fees and taxes to pay for transit—are grounded in misconceptions and are unlikely to achieve their stated goals.

The principle of consumer sovereignty has played a powerful role in the increase in America's wealth and in the welfare of its citizens. Producers (including developers) have responded rapidly to households' demands. It is a giant step backward to interfere with this effective process unless the benefits of intervention substantially exceed its costs. Bans on the amount of land that individuals can consume, or even worse, on driving, are extremely difficult to justify. In fact, when households purchase a single-family home in the suburbs, they are not consuming land per se. Rather, they are buying a number of attributes—good public schools, relative safety from crime, easy access to recreation and shopping opportunities, low taxes, responsive public services. Lot size is rarely crucial to the decision. In any event, lot sizes are becoming smaller as a result of rising land prices, and there may be opportunities for developers through creative design to reduce lot sizes still further while preserving privacy. But smaller lots are not going to revive the central city or alter significantly the consequences of suburban and exurban development.

Paradoxically, as the U.S. political system increasingly emphasizes deregulation and market processes at the federal, and sometimes the state, level, command-and-control restrictions and interest-group impositions at the local level are growing and are frequently being reinforced by actions in the courts. Much of this shift, exemplified by the expansion of land use regulations, reflects a retargeting of regulatory activity from economic sectors to such social concerns as education, health, and the environment. But for the cost-benefit calculus advocated by the anti-sprawl protagonists to prevail, the quality of their empirical evidence must be improved. ■

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Metropolitan AREAS

Regional Differences

BY JANET ROTHENBERG PACK

Janet Rothenberg Pack, a visiting fellow in the Brookings Economic Studies program, is professor of public policy & management and of real estate at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. *She is grateful to Richard Voith for his generous willingness to share the data he has assembled for 277 metropolitan areas, on which much of the article is based.* *A chapter in Pack's forthcoming book on city-suburban links and policy will explore the implications of broad regional differences in depth and make clear the vast literature on which this paper stands.*

The new argument in the urban research literature of the 1990s is that the economic health of cities and suburbs is closely linked, with the prosperity of suburban communities, in particular, depending on that of the central city. Suburbs that ignore the decline of their central cities cannot, despite their strong belief to the contrary, go it alone. The well-being of entire metropolitan areas hinges on intra-metropolitan cooperation—and on public policies that encourage city-suburb cooperation in infrastructure planning and financing, tax-base sharing, school finance reform, school district consolidation, and land use planning.

Collage by Glenn Pierce

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The new focus on increased metropolitan cooperation stems from the much higher poverty and crime rates in the cities and the greater growth of both population and employment opportunities in suburbs, but also on a body of research on links between growth rates of cities and suburbs within metropolitan areas. For example, Richard Voith has shown that although the relationship between population growth in cities and suburbs of the Northeast and Midwest in the 1960s was negative—that is, as cities lost population, suburbs gained—the relationship turned positive in the 1970s and 1980s—the greater the gain, or the smaller the loss in city population, the greater the growth in their suburbs. Income growth in cities and suburbs also appears to have been unrelated in the 1960s but positively correlated in the 1970s and 1980s. These data have led many researchers to conclude that the city-suburb competition of the 1960s gave way to complementarity in the 1970s and 1980s. Going further, Voith, Anthony Downs, and H.V. Savitch believe the causality in this relationship runs from city to suburb.

Nonetheless, in most older metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest, population in the cities continues to decline, population in the suburbs continues to grow, and city incomes are far lower than those in the suburbs. By contrast, in the South and even more in the West, both city and suburban areas have grown. The generalization that the fates of suburbs and their central cities are inextricably entwined seems premature.

Large interregional disparities in metropolitan development, in particular in city and suburban growth patterns, suggest the need for flexible urban policy rather than for one-size-fits-all metropolitanism. If city-suburb disparities in some U.S. regions are relatively small and if cities and suburbs are both growing, there may, for example, be less reason for urging greater metropolitan policy coordination. Even in slowly growing regions, increased coordination may reduce disparities between cities and their suburbs but may not increase city growth rates enough to reduce the disparities among regions. In short, in formulating urban policy generally, it may be necessary to heed regional implications.

Population and Income Growth

Figures 1 and 2 show the 1960–90 growth rates in both population and per capita income for metropolitan-area cities and suburbs in different regions of the United States. They show strong regional differences even though the overall relationship (shown by the dashed line) for both population and income in metropolitan-area cities and suburbs is clearly positive (with the dispersion of symbols indicating substantial variation around the average relationship).

The regional population pattern is clear from the clustering of metropolitan areas in the same region along different segments of the graph. Nearly all the cities in the Northeast lost population, as did many in the Midwest.

As the height of the regional lines shows, suburban population grew most in the West and least in the Midwest. The dispersion of the observations around the lines shows the extent of variation within regions. The South and West show wide differences in suburban growth rates, the Northeast and Midwest much less.

Differences in the extension of the lines from left to right indicate the relative growth rates of cities. The population declines in the Northeastern and Midwestern cities are seen by their clustering at the left of the horizontal axis. The extension of the lines to the right and the horizontal spread of the observations show both the far higher rates of growth of cities in the South and West and the greater variation in their growth rates. The slope of the lines takes us back to the concern with city-suburban links. The slope is steepest in the Northeast, indicating that increases in city growth rates are associated with the greatest increases in suburban growth rates. In the other regions, the relatively flatter lines indicate that suburban population growth rates are far less closely associated with city growth rates.

Data behind the graphs (not shown, but available from the author) reveal further regional differences with important policy implications. Whether metropolitan areas were gaining or losing central-city populations, for example, the ratio of suburban to city population increased substantially over the 30 years. Nonetheless, the suburb-to-city population ratio increased less in the metropolitan areas whose city populations were increasing than in those whose cities were losing population.

The cities of the West, on average much smaller than those of the Northeast in 1960, had outstripped Northeastern cities by 1990, and their metropolitan areas had nearly doubled in population. During that same period the metropolitan areas of the South grew nearly 70 percent, those of the Northeast and Midwest, only 12.5 percent and 25 percent, respectively.

Regional analysis of the relationship between suburban and city population growth rates shows that city growth rates have a positive effect on suburban growth rates everywhere but are statistically significant only in the Northeast and Midwest (consistent with the much smaller variation of the observations in these regions on the graph). In the Northeast about 12 percent of the variation in suburban population growth rates appears to be associated with variation in the city growth rates; in the Midwest the explained variation is only 4 percent, indicating that other factors may be more important for suburban population growth even in these regions. In the South and West, city population growth rates seem to have virtually no role in suburban growth. (Disentangling the effects of annexation from regional differences is a challenge since most annexations have occurred in the most rapidly developing regions, the South and West, as noted by David Rusk in *Cities Without Suburbs*.)

In figure 2, which shows the relationship between percentage changes in real per capita incomes in metropolitan-area cities and suburbs by region, regional patterns are far less sharp. Real

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per capita income falls in only one suburb and in only one city. Metropolitan areas in the same region are far less clustered on both the city and suburban dimensions along different segments of the graph and, with the exception of the South, show relatively little variation from the line. The slopes of the lines are steeper than for population, indicating that city and suburban per capita income growth rates are more closely related than are the population growth rates. Finally, the height of the lines shows the greatest growth rates in the South. The other three regions are very close together, with somewhat lower growth rates in the West. Thus, although city incomes have grown more slowly than suburban incomes, the differences are small relative to the population changes.

Absolute levels—not just growth rates—of per capita income are also important in analyzing differences between cities and suburbs and among regions in formulating urban policy. Regionally, two things stand out with important implications for a policy that emphasizes closer city-suburban cooperation. First, in the South and West, suburban incomes exceeded city incomes by only 2 percent and 5 percent, respectively, in 1990. Indeed until 1990, city per capita incomes exceeded suburban incomes, although the ratio of suburban to city incomes has been increasing steadily since 1960. In the Northeast and Midwest, the disparities are much greater: suburban incomes exceeded city incomes by 33 percent in the Northeast and 16 percent in the Midwest in 1990. As in the South and West, these differences have increased over time, although at no time did city incomes exceed suburban incomes. Thus, depending on the region of the country being considered, very different conclusions can be reached about income disparities between cities and suburbs and about policies to narrow them. Second, there is no absolute Northeast-Midwest vs. West-South divide. In general, Southern metropolitan areas have the lowest per capita incomes and the Northeast and West the highest.

Simple statistical analysis of income growth in the city and its suburbs and region over the three decades shows a positive relationship and shows that relative to the Northeast region, suburbs in the South grew at a faster rate, even after the faster rate of growth in their central cities is taken into account. No regional effect was found for the Midwest or for the West relative to the Northeast. Overall the explained variation of suburban income growth rates when city growth rates and region are taken into account is about 22 percent. Unlike the city and suburban population growth variables, the relationship between city and suburban incomes is

Figure I. Percentage Change in City and Suburban Population, 1960-90, by Metropolitan Area and Region of the United States

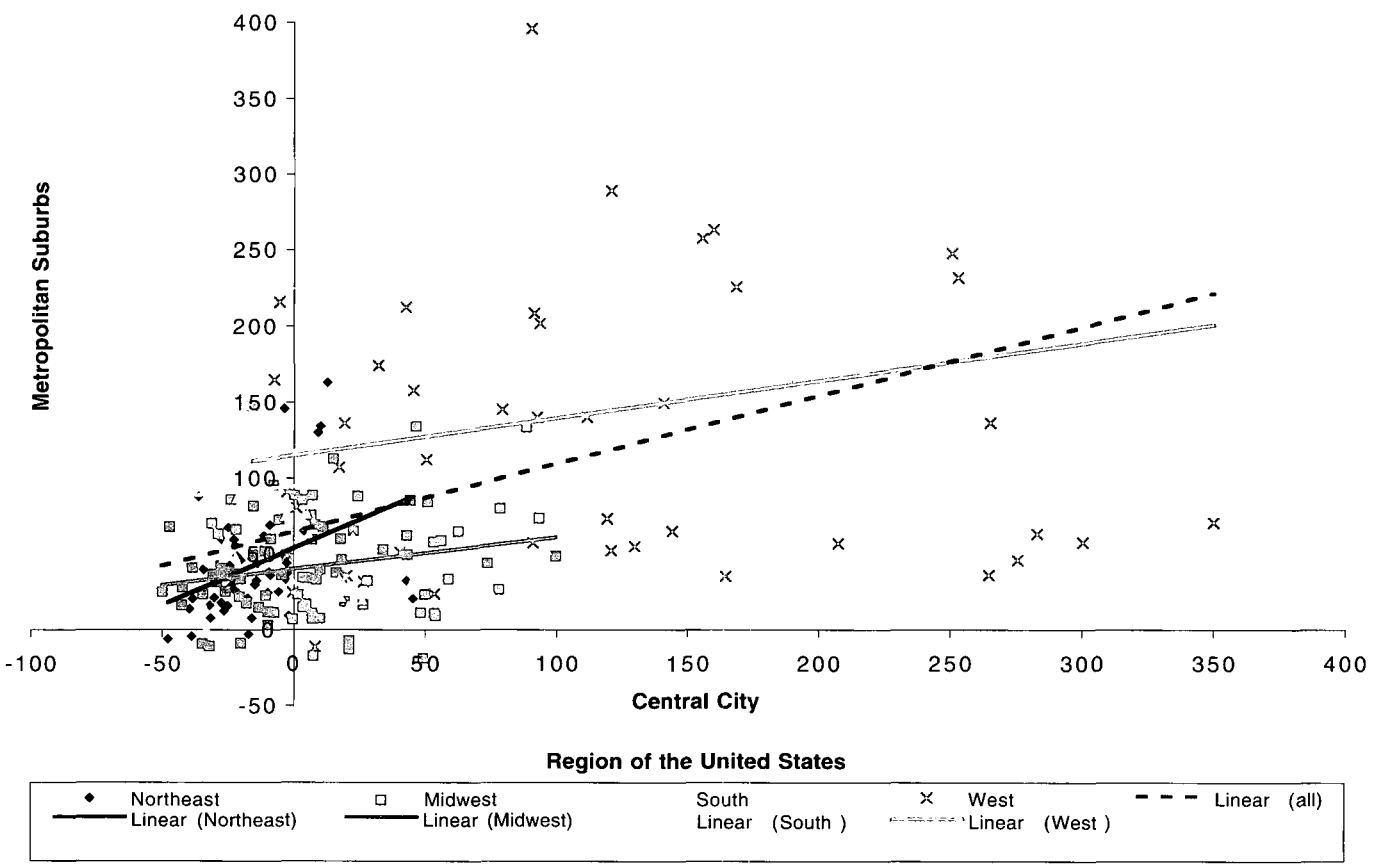

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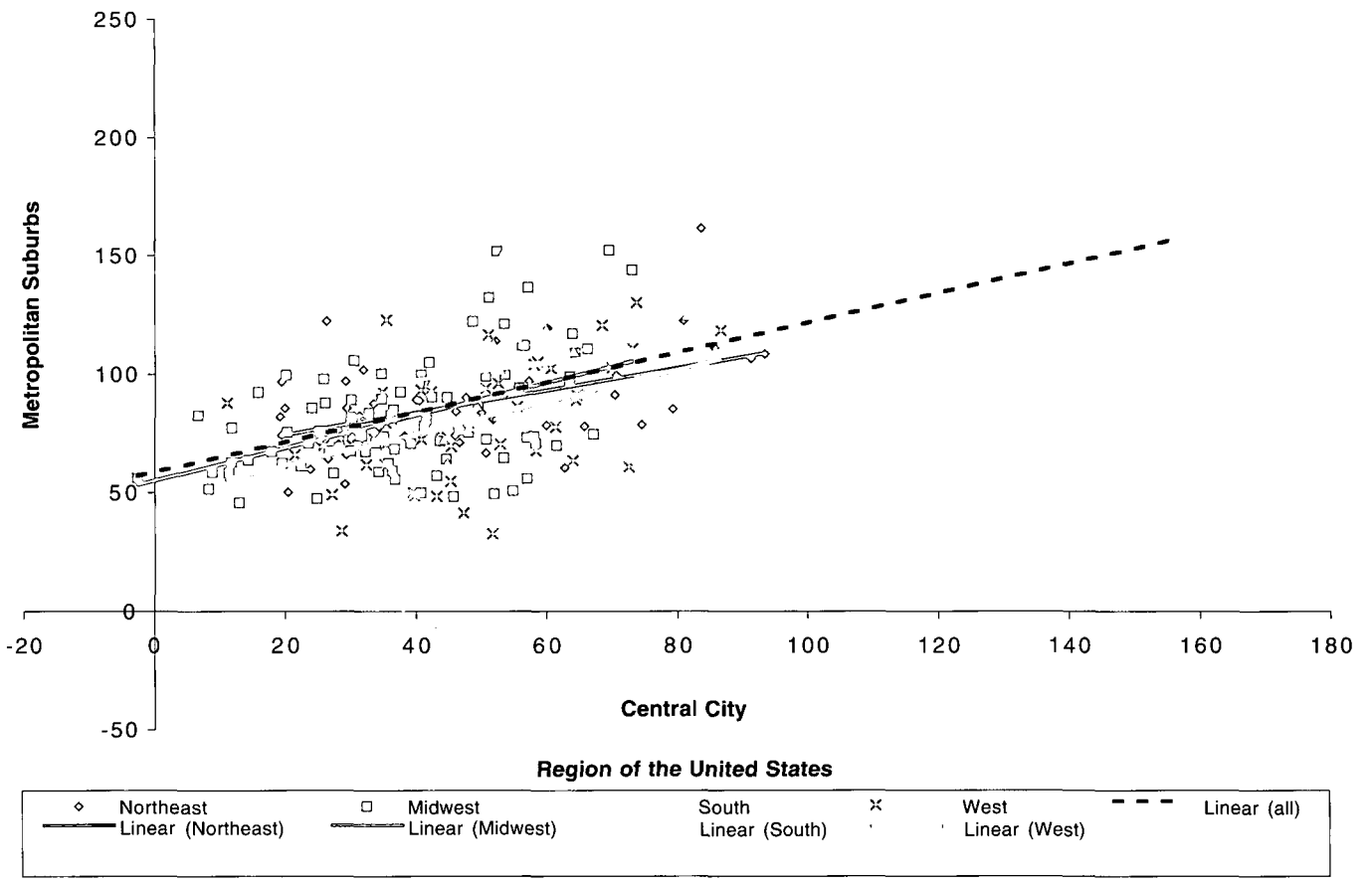
Figure 2. Percentage Change in Real Per Capita Income, 1960-90, by Metropolitan Area and Region of the United States



somewhat more pronounced, but the regional differences appear less significant. When the relationships between city and suburban incomes are examined separately for each region, the differences among regions are more pronounced in two ways: the closest relationships are found for the Midwest and for the West, with a 1 percent increase in city income associated with an increase of suburban income of about 0.66 percent. In the South and Midwest, the suburban income increase is only about 0.33 percent to 0.50 percent for each 1 percent increase in city per capita incomes. The other major difference among the regions is that city income growth rates explain about 20–25 percent of the growth in suburban incomes (higher than for population) in all regions but the South, where variation in the city-suburban relationship is so great that the explanatory value is a mere 2 percent.

Policy Implications

Given the widespread expansion of cities in the South and West and the decline of cities in the Northeast and Midwest, public policies designed to bring population back to the cities may not be equally appropriate for all regions. Indeed, according to the statistical analysis of the link between suburban and city population growth rates, a more metropolitan-oriented policy that recognizes the importance of growth in the city for the region as a whole would probably have greatest impact in the Northeast.

The great dispersion of population growth rates among metropolitan areas in the South and West and their convergence in the Northeast and Midwest also suggest that urban policy within the South and West needs to be more differentiated among metropolitan areas than does policy in the Northeast and Midwest.

In the South and West both city and suburban population and per capita incomes have grown much faster over the three decades. But per capita income growth rates in the Northeast and Midwest approached or exceeded those in the South and West in the 1960s and 1980s, though they fell far short in the 1970s. This variability of regional growth rates in per capita incomes may also suggest the need for a more regionally oriented macroeconomic policy.

Moreover, to the extent that per capita incomes measure welfare levels, the relative population declines of the Northeast and Midwest have not been associated with similar declines in welfare levels. Thus attempts to change three decades of regional shifts from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West should proceed with care. Only where these shifts have been induced by inefficient subsidies

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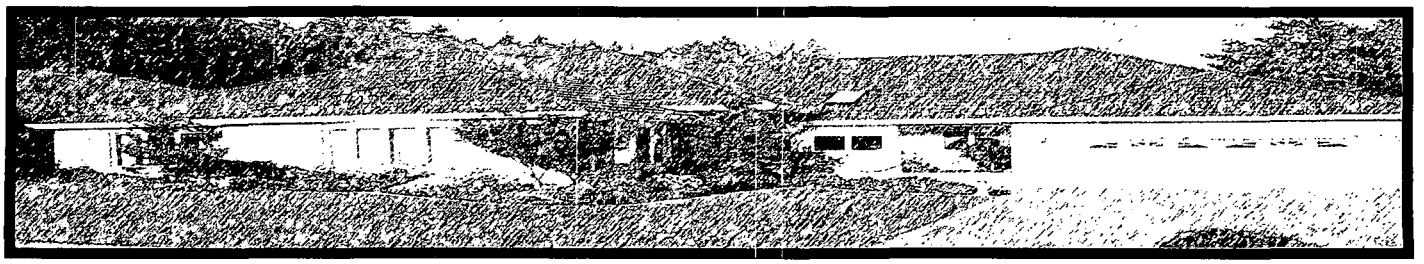
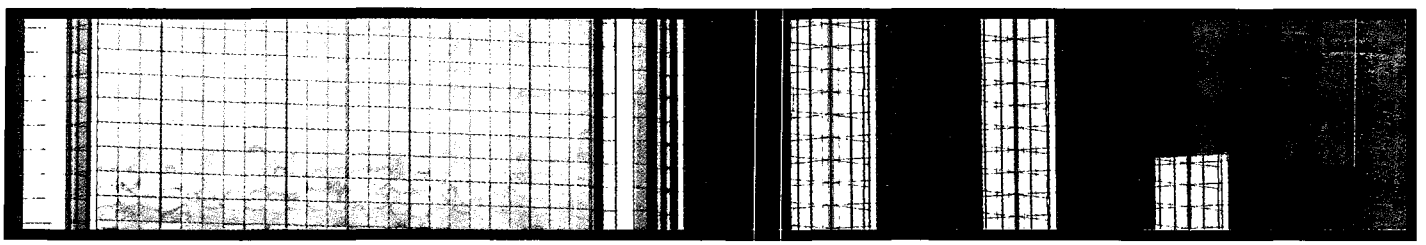


Large interregional disparities in city and suburban growth patterns suggest the need for flexible urban policy rather than one-size-fits-all metropolitanism.



that support per capita incomes should policy changes be considered. If an important national goal was and is to spread the population across the nation, to reduce concentration in the East, then regional policies to maintain this redistribution may have been justified—though, like all policies, they require periodic scrutiny to evaluate their costs and benefits and distributional implications.

The similarity of per capita incomes in the cities and suburbs of the South and West suggests that the poverty problems in the cities there would not be much helped by greater metropolitan integration. In the Northeast and Midwest, however, the higher suburban incomes are a potential resource for helping to alleviate poverty in the cities—if, of course, suburbs can be made to see their self-interest in the fortunes of the cities.

Nor do the similar, but low, city and suburban incomes in the South suggest much payoff from greater metropolitan integration. Rather, it is in their interest to maintain their relatively high rates of income growth and keep playing catch-up with other regions.

Closing Comments

Going somewhat further, the dispersal of population and economic activity both from city to suburbs and from Northeast and Midwest to South and West has had mixed results. Generally speaking, the gains of the policies now seen as biased in favor of suburban locations—mortgage interest deductions, property tax deductions, road construction in contrast to the development of mass transit systems, local control of land use regulations—may have been in overall quality of life and industrial efficiency. The costs have been primarily distributional—ultimately, the concentration of poverty and other social ills in the central cities. The policies that helped to spur the movement of businesses and wealthier families from city to suburbs and to restrict that same movement by the poor may have gone too far and may require cutbacks or reversals to change the direction of the incentives.

Similarly, many developments led to the reallocation of people and firms from the Midwest and Northeast to the South and West. Technological changes in manufacturing production, transportation, communications, and agriculture; air conditioning; the aging of the population; and increased incomes all opened up opportunities for growth and development in the South and West. Lower wages and the absence of unions in the South pulled industry from the North and Midwest. On the policy side, the national highway system; defense procurement, with defense industries concentrated in areas with warmer year-round climates and large expanses of open land; the internationalization of markets; federal assistance for water resource development and subsidized water rates in the relatively dryer regions of the Western states facilitated development in places where it would have been impossible. Environmental laws, with which compliance was relatively more difficult in the more industrialized, more densely developed Northeast and Midwest, also pushed some development South and West. Again, these movements and the policies behind them may have improved overall welfare but at a distributional cost. As policymakers review new urban interventions, they should analyze these regional policies with an eye not only to whether they improve welfare, but also to their distributional implications.

In sum, both current urban policy recommendations and the many urban and other policies that affect development in urban areas also affect the regional location decisions of people and firms and are almost surely affected by America's pronounced regional differences. Policy interventions that increase intra-metropolitan cooperation and integration must be sensitive to these differences. ■

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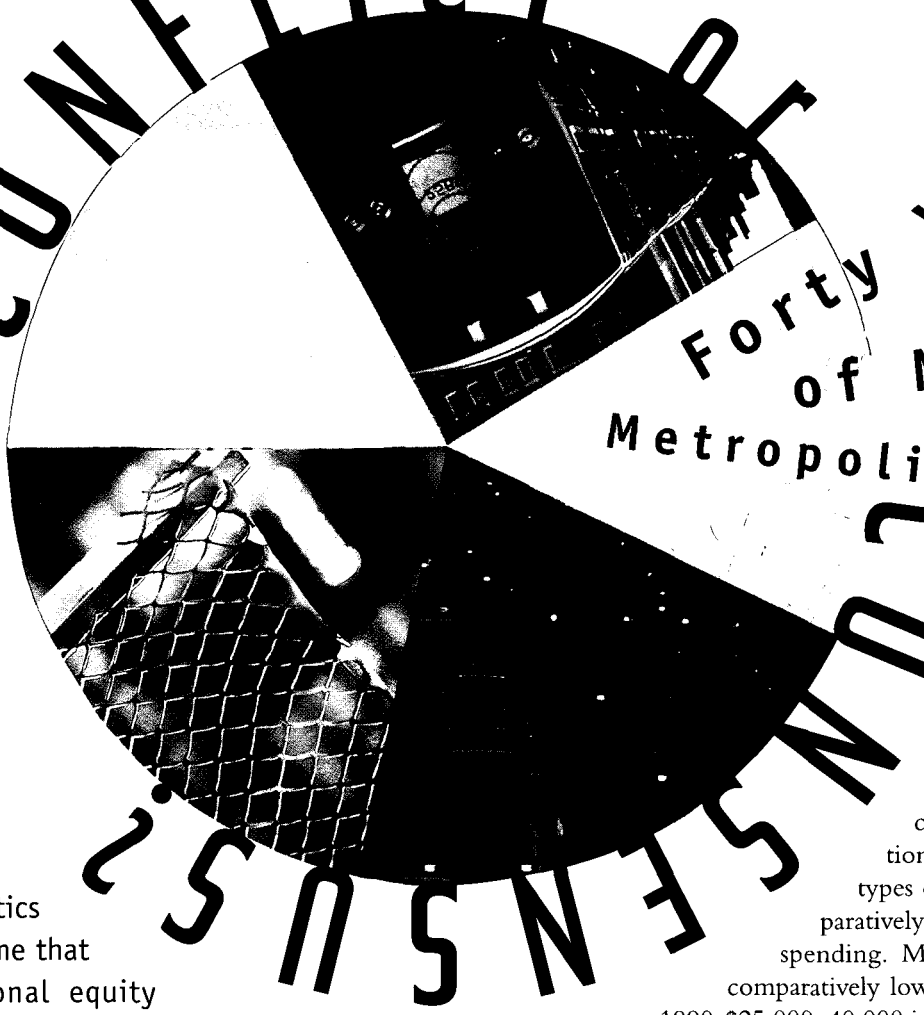
Conflict or Consensus?

Forty Years of Minnesota Metropolitan Politics

BY MYRON ORFIELD



College by Glenn Pierce

Skeptics tell me that regional equity reform will never happen in America's metropolitan regions because the suburbs are now in charge of American politics. It may be true that the suburbs are in charge of American politics. But the politics of metropolitan reform is not about cities versus suburbs or, for that matter, about Democrats versus Republicans.

The suburbs are not a monolith, economically, racially, or politically. Surrounding America's central cities, with their high social needs and low per capita tax wealth, are three types of suburbs. First are the older suburbs, which comprise about a quarter of the population of U.S. metropolitan regions. These communities are often declining socially faster than the central cities and often have even less per household property, income, or sales tax wealth. Second are the low tax-base developing suburbs, which make up about 10–15 percent of U.S. metropolitan regions. They are growing rapidly in population, especially among school-age children, but without an adequate tax base to support that growth and its accompanying overcrowded schools, highway congestion, and ground water pollution. Both the central city and these two types of suburbs have small tax bases, comparatively high tax rates, and comparatively low spending. Median household incomes are also comparatively low: $25,000–30,000 in central cities in 1990, $25,000–40,000 in older suburbs, and $35,000–$50,000 in low tax-base developing suburbs. Families in these communities are thus extremely sensitive to property tax increases. A third type of suburb is the high tax-base developing community. These affluent communities, with the region's highest median incomes, never amount to more than 30 percent of a region's population. They have all the benefits of a regional economy—access to labor and product markets, regionally built freeways and often airports—but are able to externalize the costs of social and economic need on the older suburbs and the central city.

Suburbs and cities can also be surprisingly diverse in their electoral results. Not all suburbs are Republican—or all cities Democratic. In Philadelphia, Republicans control almost all the suburbs and even the white working-class parts of the city. In Pittsburgh, Democrats control virtually all suburban seats except the highest property-wealth areas. In San Francisco, almost all suburbs are represented by Democrats, while in Los

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Angeles and Southern California, most of the white suburbs are represented by Republicans. In general, Democrats build their base in central cities, move to the older and low tax-base suburbs, and, if they are very effective, capture a few of the high tax-base suburbs. Republicans do just the opposite. In many states the balance of power rests on electoral contests in a few older suburbs or low tax-capacity developing suburbs.

Minnesota has been engaged in the politics of metropolitan regional reform for almost 40 years. Over the decades, three types of metropolitan coalitions have sought to move policy reforms through the state legislature. The first, a Republican-led bipartisan coalition, engaged in some bitter legislative fights; the second, a consensualist-led coalition, eschewed controversy; the third, a Democratic-driven bipartisan group, revived the real-world reform political style of their Republican predecessors. The following short history of metropolitanism in Minnesota suggests the complexity of coalition politics—and my own conviction that, while compromise and accommodation is the necessary essence of politics, regional reform, like all other real reform movements in U.S. history, necessarily involves some degree of controversy.

A short history of metropolitanism in Minnesota suggests that while compromise and accommodation is the necessary essence of politics, regional reform necessarily involves controversy.

The Progressive Republican Vanguard

In the 1960s and 1970s, metropolitan reform efforts in Minnesota's legislature were led by "good government" Rockefeller Republicans and reform Democrats—in a sense the progressives that Richard Hofstader wrote of in his *Age of Reform*. Joined by leaders of local corporations, they took aim at waste in government and set out to plan and shape a more cohesive, cost-effective, efficient, and equitable region. Though they sought rough metropolitan-wide equity in Minnesota's Twin Cities, they were not typical practitioners of class warfare. They valued equity because they knew from hard-headed calculation the costs of inequity and of destructive competition for development among municipalities in a single metropolitan region.

In some ways progressive Republican regionalism was an elegant, direct, limited-government response to growing sprawl and interlocal disparity. Joining Minnesota's Governor LeVander were Oregon's Tom McCall, Michigan's Miliken and Romney, and the great Republican mayor of Indianapolis, Richard Lugar. Had the country heeded their far-sighted strategy, the 1980s and 1990s might have been much different for the central cities and older suburbs.

In Minnesota the progressive Republicans and reform Democrats created regional sewer, transit, and airport authorities for the Twin Cities, as well as a Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities with weak supervisory powers over these authorities. (Making the Met Council an elected body was a top goal, but it failed in a tie vote in 1967.) They also created a metropolitan land use planning framework and enacted Minnesota's famous tax-base sharing, or fiscal disparities, law, which, since 1971, has shared 40 percent of the growth of our commercial and industrial property tax base among the 187 cities, 49 school districts, and 7 counties in our region of some 2.5 million people.

The battle to pass the fiscal disparities act was brutal. Though the legislation, introduced in 1969, had its origins in the ethereal world of good government progressivism, its political managers were shrewd vote counters who made sure that two-thirds of the Twin City region's lawmakers understood that the bill would both lower their constituents' taxes and improve their schools and public services. Some of the progressives' key allies were populists who did not hesitate to play the class card with blue-collar voters in the low property-value suburbs. Probably not coincidentally, the populists collected most of the votes. The progressives pragmatically swallowed their compunctions.

The fiscal disparities bill that passed in 1971 was supported by a coalition of Democratic central-city legislators and Republicans from less wealthy suburbs—essentially the two-thirds of the region that received new tax base from the act. A few more-rural Republicans who had a strong personal relationship with the bill's Republican sponsor went along. The opposition was also bipartisan—Democrats and Republicans representing areas in the one-third of the region that would lose some of their tax base. Debate over the bill was ugly. Republican Charlie Weaver, Sr., the bill's sponsor, was accused of fomenting "communism" and "community socialism" and of being a "Karl Marx" out to take from "the progressive communities to give to the backward ones." One opponent warned that "the fiscal disparities law will destroy the state." "Why should those who wish to work be forced to share with those who won't or can't help themselves?" demanded a representative of the high property-wealth areas. Amid growing controversy, after two divisive failed sessions, the bill would pass the Minnesota Senate by a single vote.

Not until 1975—after court challenges that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court (which refused to hear the case)—did the fiscal disparities law finally go into effect. The last legal challenge to the law came in 1981, a decade after passage. High property-wealth southern Twin Cities suburbs were finally rebuffed in the Minnesota Tax Court. But representatives and state senators from high property-wealth Twin Cities suburbs have tried to repeal the statute in virtually every legislative session for the past 25 years.

A New Approach

The tough progressive reformers were followed by consensus-based regionalists whose preferred approach, it has often been joked, was to convene leaders from across metropolitan Twin

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Cities in the boardroom of a local bank to hum together the word "regionalism." Highly polished professional policy wonks, the new generation of leaders leaned more to touring the country extolling the virtues of regional reform, which many had no part in accomplishing, than to gritty work in city halls and the legislature to make it happen. To make matters worse, business support for regionalism began to erode. The rise of national and multinational companies created a cadre of rotating, frequently moving executives who, facing a more competitive business environment, eschewed controversy in favor of political action that would boost the bottom line.

By the 1980s, proponents of the regional perspective in Minnesota had dwindled to the chairman of the Citizens League, a local policy group financially supported by the region's big businesses; a half-dozen legislators; two or three executives of declining power; and the editorial board of the Minneapolis paper.

Meanwhile, some suburbs, particularly the high property-wealth developing ones that saw no gain but plenty of loss coming from metropolitan action, rebelled. Over the course of the 1980s, as the Twin Cities region rapidly became more like the rest of the nation—more racially and socially segregated—and as fundamental divisions hardened, those suburbs hired high-priced lobbyists and prepared for a fight to dismantle "regional socialism." Metropolitanism's opponents, tough and organized, began to control the regional debate.

During 1980–90, state lawmakers gradually dismantled the metropolitan authority that had been put in place in the 1960s and 1970s. They stripped the Met Council of its authority over major development projects: the downtown domed stadium, a new regional race track, and even the Mall of America—a local landmark that by its sheer size had a thunderous effect on the retail market in central Minneapolis and St. Paul and the southern suburbs. They severely weakened the land use planning statute by giving supercedence to local zoning. They also overturned the Met Council system of infrastructure pricing, abandoned a regional affordable housing system, and shelved well-conceived regional density guidelines. And they took a hard, well-financed run at the fiscal disparities system.

Sometimes the consensus-based regionalists would oppose the changes, but more often they seemed unable to stomach controversy. Their general response to the newly assertive high property-wealth suburbs was to seek accommodation. Meanwhile, developers in the high property-wealth suburbs and their lawyers obtained coveted seats on the Met Council itself.

The first generation of regionalists had fought bloody fights for land use planning, the consolidation of regional services, and tax equity. A decade later, the consensus-based regionalists were reduced to building regional citizenship through a proposal for a bus that looked like a trolley car to connect the state capital to downtown St. Paul. Times, and tactics, had clearly changed.

The proud legacy of the first-generation regionalists was in shambles. In 1967, the Twin Cities had created a regional transit system with a tax base that encompassed seven regional counties and 187 cities. By 1998, what had been one of the most financially broad-based transit systems in the nation was struggling with below-average funding per capita. The Met Council, now in thrall to developers, allocated virtually all federal resources to its large highway building program. Finally, the Citizens League and the consensus-based regionalists, perhaps to curry favor with the rebellious high property-wealth suburbs, used their influence both to defeat the development of a fixed-rail transit service and to fragment and privatize the transit system. By the early 1980s, the southwestern developing suburbs, the most prosperous parts of the region and those that benefited most from the development of a regional sewer and highway system, were allowed to "opt out" of funding the transit system that served the region's struggling core.

In 1991, the Met Council was on the verge of being abolished. A measure to eliminate the Council passed on the House floor, and the governor opined that the Council should either do something or disappear. The consensus-based regionalists, frustrated after a decade of difficulty, were not even grousing about legislative roadblocks. They had moved on to champion school choice and had joined the business community in an effort to cut comparatively high Minnesota business property taxes.

The Third Generation

Out of this state of affairs emerged a new type of regionalist, of which I count myself one. Most of us were new to politics in the 1990s, and we were spurred to action by worrisome conditions in the Twin Cities, where concentrated poverty was growing—at the fourth fastest rate in the nation.

To address the growing concentration of poverty in the central cities, we began to investigate reforms, particularly in fair housing, at a metropolitan level. We began to wonder, in particular, whether the sprawl at the edge of the Twin Cities area was undermining the stability at the core and whether the older suburbs, adjacent to the city, were having equally serious problems. As we learned more about the region's problems, we came to appreciate the metropolitan structure that had been put in place 20 years before—a structure severely out of fashion and irrelevant in liberal circles. "What does land use planning in the suburbs have to do with us?" asked our central-city politicos. "We need more of a neighborhood-based strategy," they said. We were also received as fish out of water when we went to the Met Council and the Citizens League to discuss our regional concerns. "This is not what the Met Council is about," they said. "It is about land use planning and infrastructure, not about urban issues or poverty."

In addition to the concentration of poverty at the core, we grew interested in the subsidies and governmental actions supporting sprawl. We were inspired by the land use reforms in Oregon and the work of Governor Tom McCall, Henry Richmond, and 1,000 Friends of Oregon. We read the infrastructure work of Robert Burchell at Rutgers. We became aesthetically attached to New Urbanism and Peter Calthorpe, its proponent of metropolitan social equity and transit-oriented development.

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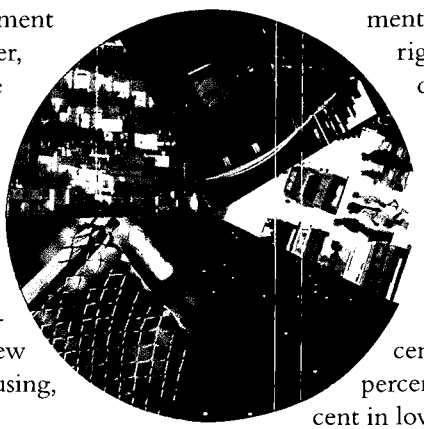
Our third-wave regionalism gradually became broader based. We added environmentalism and the strength of the environmental movement to what had heretofore been a sterile discussion of planning and efficiency. We also brought issues of concentrated poverty and regional fair housing into an equity discussion that had previously been limited to interlocal fiscal equity. The dormant strength of the civil rights movement and social gospel also readied itself for metropolitan action and activism. In only a few years, hundreds of churches joined the movement for regional reform.

We also mobilized the rapidly declining, blue-collar suburbs—angry places unattached to either political party—to advance regional reform. Blue-collar mayors, a few with decidedly hostile views toward social and racial changes in their communities, united with African-American political leaders, environmentalists, and bishops of the major regional churches to advance a regional agenda for fair housing, land use planning, tax equity, and an accountable elected regional governance structure.

In fact, probably the most important element of the new regional coalition was the older, struggling, fully developed suburbs—the biggest prospective winners in regional reform. To them, tax-base sharing means lower property taxes and better services, particularly better-funded schools. Regional housing policy means, over time, fewer units of affordable housing crowding their doorstep. As one older-suburban mayor put it, "If those guys in the new suburbs don't start to build affordable housing, we'll be swimming in this stuff."



Winning over these suburbs was not easy. We had to overcome long-term, powerful resentments and distrust, based on class and race and fueled by every national political campaign since Hubert Humphrey lost the White House in 1968. But after two years of constant cajoling and courting and steady reminders of the growing inequities among the suburbs, the middle-income, working-class, blue-collar suburbs joined the central cities and created a coalition of great political clout in the legislature.

In 1994 this coalition of central-city and suburban legislators passed the Metropolitan Reorganization Act, which placed all regional sewer, transit, and land use planning under the operational authority of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities. In doing so, it transformed the Met Council from a $40-million-a-year planning agency to a $600-million-a-year regional government operating regional sewers and transit, with supervisory authority over the major decisions of another $300-million-a-year agency that runs the regional airport. That same year, in the Metropolitan Land Use Reform Act, our coalition insulated metro-area farmers from public assessments that would have forced them to subdivide farm land for development.

In both 1993 and 1994 the legislature passed sweeping fair housing bills (both vetoed); in 1995 a weakened version was finally signed. In 1995 the legislature passed a measure that would have added a significant part of the residential property tax base to the fiscal disparities pool. While the measure passed strongly, it too was vetoed. In 1996 a statewide land use planning framework was adopted, and a regional brownfields fund created. Throughout the process, we restored to the Council many of the powers and prerogatives that had been removed from it during the 1980s in the areas of land use planning and infrastructure pricing. In each area of reform—land use planning, tax equity, and regional structural reform—we were initially opposed by the consensus-based regionalists as "too controversial," only to have our ideas adopted by them a few years later as the political center of gravity began to change.

Worth Fighting For

Like all real reform, regional reform is a struggle. From the fight against municipal corruption and the fight against the trusts to the women's movement, the consumer movement, the environmental movement, and the civil rights movement, reform has involved difficult contests against entrenched interests who operated against the general welfare. Today, we are told that the Age of Reform is over. We are in an age of consensus politics, when calmer words—"collaboration," "boundary crossing," "win-win" strategies—carry more promise than "assertive" ones.

In every region of this nation, 20–40 percent of the people live in central cities, 25–30 percent in older declining suburbs, and 10–15 percent in low tax-base developing suburbs. These communities, representing a clear majority of regional population, are being directly harmed by an inefficient, wasteful, unfair system. Studies indicate that the regions in the nation that have the least economic disparity have the strongest economic growth and those with most disparity are the weakest economically. The social polarization and wasteful sprawl that are common in our nation take opportunity from people and businesses, destroy cities and older suburbs, waste our economic bounty, and threaten our future.

Those who care about these problems must "assert" themselves to reverse these trends. We must engage in a politics that is free of personal attacks and sensationalism, that is conducted with a smile and good manners—like the progressives. At each roadblock, we must seek a compromise that moves equity forward, before we entrench unproductively. We must achieve the broadest possible level of good feeling, gather to our cause as many allies as we can from all walks of life and from all points of the compass. We must educate and persuade. However, if there are those who stand in our path utterly—who will permit no forward movement—we must fight. We must fight for the future of individuals, for the future of communities, and for the future of our country.

In the end, the goal is regional reform, not regional consensus. ■

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The Market and Metropolitanism

BY CHRISTOPHER LEINBERGER

Most contributors to this *Review* symposium have identified the key role of public policies in shaping our metropolitan areas. Certainly, public policies enacted immediately after World War II, which provided government-backed mortgage insurance for new suburban houses and created the Interstate Highway System, encouraged the low-density pattern of metropolitan development that has come to be known as suburban sprawl.

Yet these early government policies only reflected fundamental changes in consumer desires. The public sector adopted these new policies because most people wanted the conditions they created. At the same time, those same consumer desires were shaping what developers were producing in private real estate markets. In reaction to the dirty, crowded, and noisy prewar city, returning veterans and their families embraced a then-new, now wholly familiar, version of the American dream. Its irreducible and unchallenged elements were privacy for the immediate family, space to buffer intrusive neighbors, the flexibility of personal transportation, and control over local government and schools. For four decades, these goals dominated the development of new territory at the periphery of every American metropolitan area. Only

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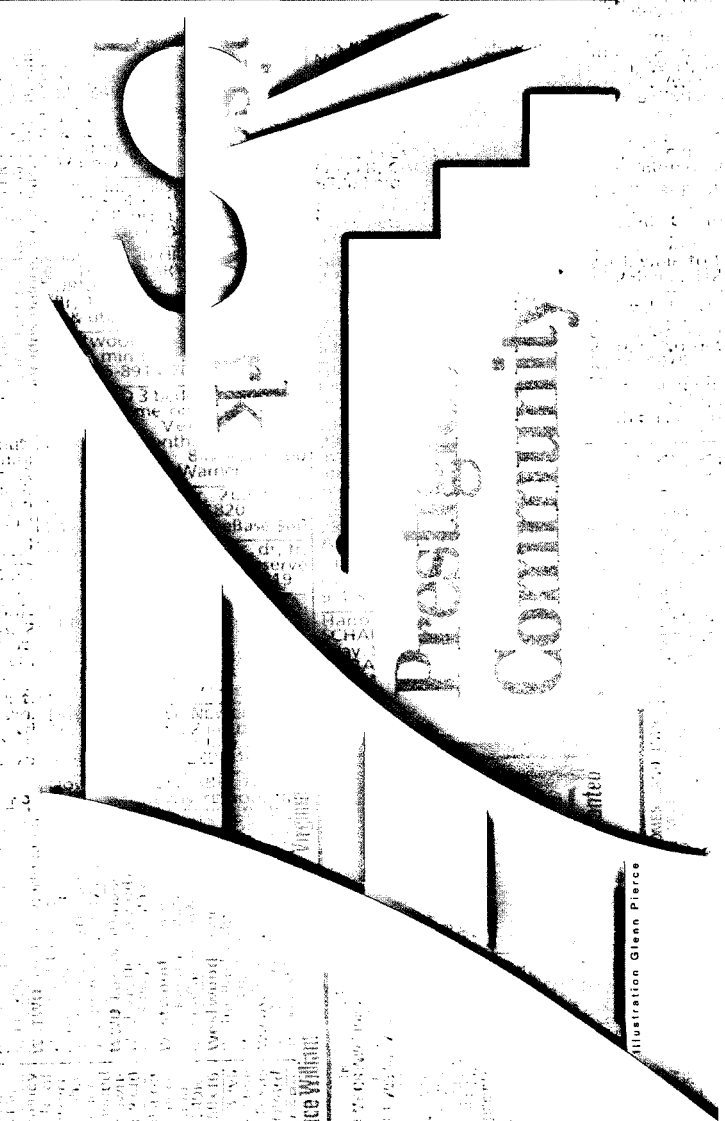

Illustration Glenn Pierce

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now is the market starting to understand the unintended consequences of the realization of this dream. Only now, since parts of the market are becoming disenchanted, can we begin to question long-dominant conventional development practices.

From the developer's perspective, the key to profitable activity under currently dominant conditions is simplicity. An overall metropolitan system whose goals include maximizing privacy and the almost exclusive use of personal transportation permits individual developers to virtually ignore the complex urban fabric and context. For developers, it is easiest and most profitable to build single, standard product types, with which the financial institutions and local governments are familiar, on greenfield sites on the fringe. It is also simpler to market and manage modular, single-use developments.

Thus, the real estate development industry now has 19 standardized product types—a cookie-cutter array of office, industrial, retail, hotel, apartment, residential, and miscellaneous building types. These projects are easy and cheap to finance, build, trade, and manage. To take one example, a "neighborhood center" will always be built on a 12- to 15-acre site, with 20 percent of the space set aside for building and the remaining 80 percent dedicated to parking. The center will invariably be anchored by a 50,000- to 70,000-square foot grocery store, a 20,000- to 30,000-square foot drugstore, and in-line shops occupied by national chain retailers. It will draw its customers from the 15,000 households in the "neighborhood" in a 3- to 5-mile radius. Like most other projects, it will have little relationship to the natural or built environment around it. Also like most other projects, it will be separated from other kinds of land uses, so that retail goes with retail, housing goes with housing, and so on.

For nearly all income-producing real estate, the most critical locational criteria are visibility from the highway and accessibility to the relevant user population by car. These two criteria are less about people than about their automobiles, which are of paramount importance. It is an axiom in the real estate industry that "parking drives development." In a typical development there is generally more square footage for parked cars than for activities for the people who own those cars. Every 1,000 square feet of office space requires about 1,500 square feet of parking space; every 1,000 square feet of restaurant seating space necessitates 3,500 square feet of parking space.

Unfortunately, this simple, standardized kind of development is very good at creating "suburban sprawl." Why? Because places for shopping, working, playing, and living are separated spatially, people become highly dependent on their cars, buildings become stranded in the middle of vast asphalt parking lots, and low overall densities spread new growth widely across the landscape.

The unintended negative consequences of current real estate development patterns are many: massive traffic congestion; air and water pollution, mainly due to automobile use; undifferentiated "could be anywhere" neighborhoods and strip malls; concentrated urban poverty in older core areas; and strained infrastructures. The last have arisen because governments have not been able both to pay for new infrastructure for low-density development and to maintain old existing infrastructure. Perhaps the worst consequence is that most Americans now believe they can leave key social problems behind by moving to a new ring of suburbs on the metropolitan fringe. The rapid decline of the inner suburbs, built 20 to 50 years ago, is bleak testimony to this.

Many real estate developers and Wall Street traders are taking note of these negative consequences and reconsidering the way we build and live. Nostalgia for denser, less car dependent, mixed-use neighborhoods and the rise of the New Urbanism have become important new trends in residential real estate in the 1990s. The success of the new urbanists in selling their vision since the Congress for the New Urbanism was organized in 1992 is nothing short of astounding. True, up to now, that vision has actually been embodied in only a few hundred of the many thousands of new subdivisions being built across the nation. And the new urbanists' success in achieving many of the proclaimed advantages of their designs has yet to be clearly demonstrated. Yet their ideas are a breath of fresh air that may have important consequences in the near future.

The key to the new vision is complexity. Convenience and privacy, while still important, are no longer enough. People want a sense of community, a sense of place, a sense of history, and a connection to nature. The ideal is to walk out your back door and have privacy; walk out your front door and have community; walk a few blocks for services, maybe for work; and walk a few blocks further for a nature preserve. It is also important to have easy car or transit connections to other parts of the metropolitan area, including other businesses, cultural resources, and an airport. Finally, neighborhoods should have places for families of all income levels to live. Whether today's status-conscious American households will accept such economic integration is not yet proven; it was the norm in prewar neighborhoods, according to old census data.

The complexity of this new vision makes it more difficult to build and maintain than the current model, though probably less expensive in the long run. Yet I believe this new ideal will spread in popularity because growing segments of the market want it. Bored, frustrated, and financially strapped because of current development patterns, people are no longer satisfied with a large house on a large lot off a cul-de-sac miles from anything. They want more options. Some emerging evidence is easy to see: loft housing is appearing in downtowns; prices for houses in many older, complex, mixed-use neighborhoods (the ones that are models for New Urbanism) are rising rapidly. At the same time, prices for conventional houses on many metropolitan fringes are increasing only minimally; and the few new suburban projects that are built on new urbanism lines appear to be financial successes.

This emerging vision breaks all the old rules of standardization and simplicity. But the market is a powerful force. The market helped get us into our current mess. In the long run, I believe it will get us out. ■

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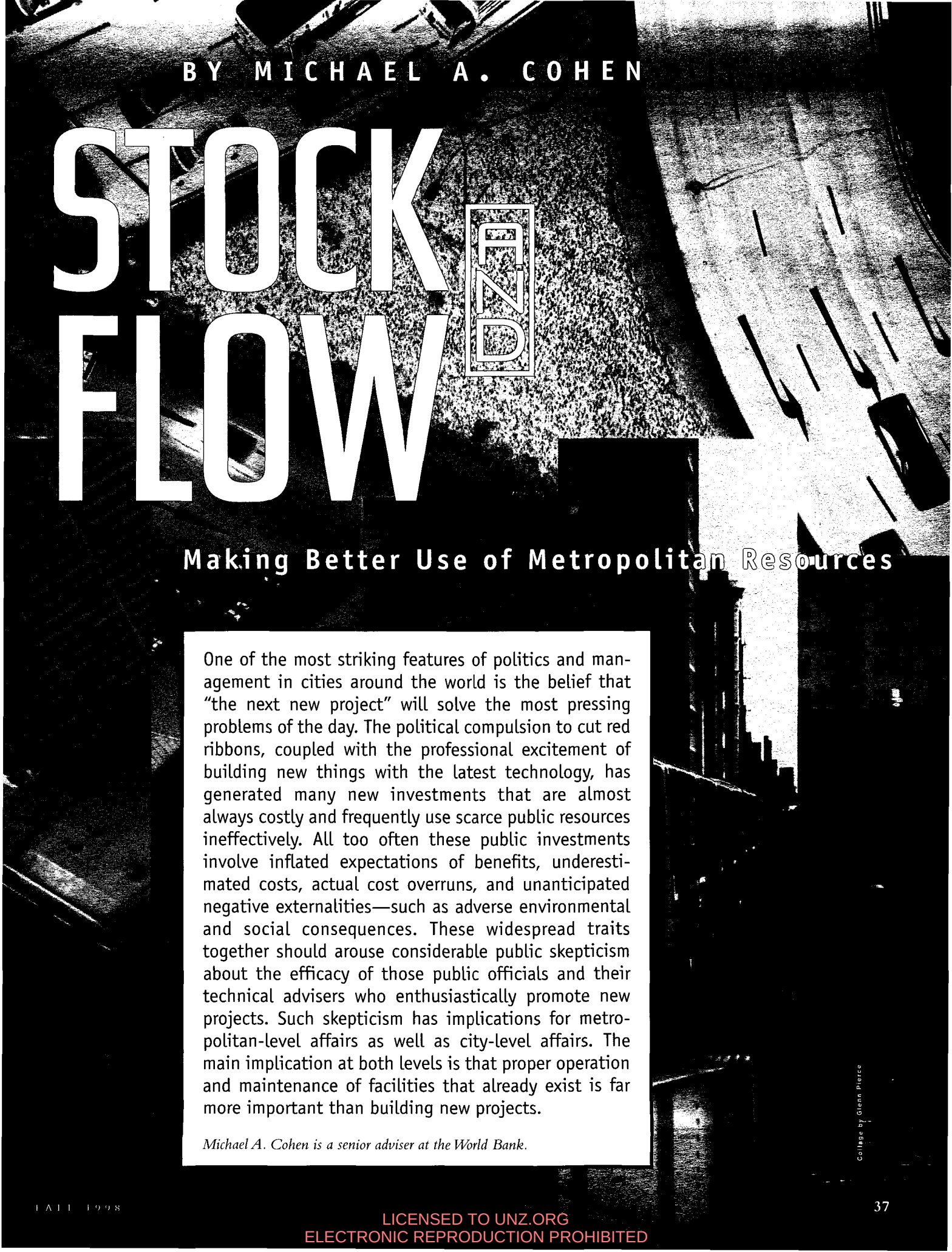

BY MICHAEL A. COHEN

STOCK AND FLOW

Making Better Use of Metropolitan Resources

One of the most striking features of politics and management in cities around the world is the belief that "the next new project" will solve the most pressing problems of the day. The political compulsion to cut red ribbons, coupled with the professional excitement of building new things with the latest technology, has generated many new investments that are almost always costly and frequently use scarce public resources ineffectively. All too often these public investments involve inflated expectations of benefits, underestimated costs, actual cost overruns, and unanticipated negative externalities—such as adverse environmental and social consequences. These widespread traits together should arouse considerable public skepticism about the efficacy of those public officials and their technical advisers who enthusiastically promote new projects. Such skepticism has implications for metropolitan-level affairs as well as city-level affairs. The main implication at both levels is that proper operation and maintenance of facilities that already exist is far more important than building new projects.

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Collage by Glenn Pierce

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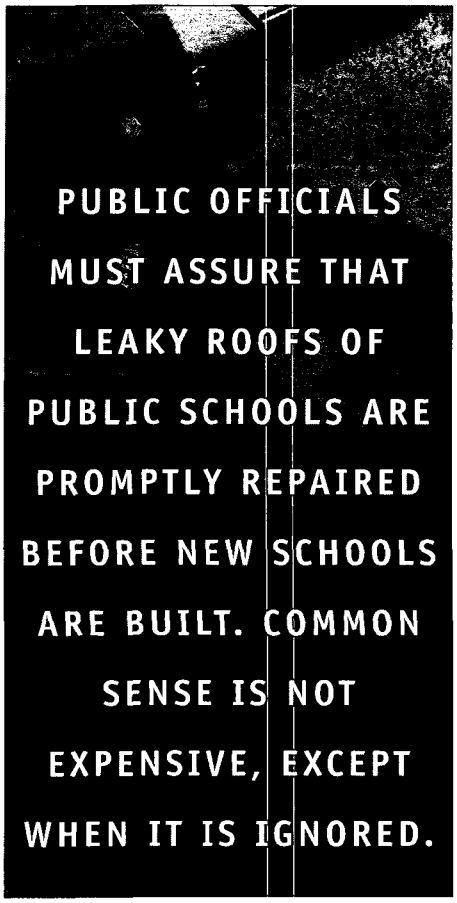
In the early 1990s, the World Bank roughly estimated the value of existing infrastructure stock in the cities of developing countries—including water, sanitation, roads, bridges, public lighting, and traffic signals—to be on the order of U.S.$3 trillion. Its rough estimate of annual investment in these sectors was about U.S.$150 billion. Both are very large numbers. But the important point is that annual investment (the flow) was only about 5 percent of existing investments (the stock). Even if these numbers are incorrect by an order of magnitude, their general proportions are reasonable.



Judging by the time and attention given the preparation and appraisal of new investments, including cutting their red ribbons, "the new" is clearly much more attractive politically and emotionally than "the old." Yet from a public policy perspective, sound management of the physical well-being of the city must focus primarily on obtaining as many benefits from the existing stock as possible. The numbers are overwhelmingly convincing: a 5 percent increase in the benefits coming from the stock of U.S.$3 trillion is equal to U.S.$150 billion, the size of the whole annual flow. Getting those benefits from the stock, however, need not involve more financing and indebtedness, more environmental impacts, or more social disruption. In layman's terms, cities should be getting more out of what they already have before they make new investments (or cut new ribbons!)

This argument is not intended to discourage needed new investments to complement and support the existing stock—such as rehabilitating an old water treatment plant or fixing potholes in city streets. But before a city invests in a new subway to move its traffic faster, it probably should identify better ways to manage existing traffic flows. A World Bank–financed traffic study in metropolitan Manila in the Philippines in the 1980s found that traffic speeds could be increased by 30 percent, traffic volumes would grow by 40 percent, and accidents would drop 40 percent as a result of improved traffic management. While individual results will certainly vary from city to city, the general principle is that improved management of the existing stock deserves to be tested in every case before the public is asked to finance new infrastructure.

This argument about stock and flow should also be put into a broader economic and social framework at the metropolitan level. Public investments almost always eventually require both increasing taxes and finding finance in capital markets. But the administrative and political costs of raising taxes are frequently underestimated. Moreover, using private capital for a public investment inevitably increases the financial costs of all subsequent borrowings in the market, both public and private. Large investments that take a long time to build and whose local economic benefits will accrue only in the medium to long term further depress short-run local economic productivity. Building a subway, for example, which results in digging up streets and slowing traffic for years, needs to be viewed in terms of its net impact—time lost by commuters during construction as well as expected time gained by future subway users.

Finally, this argument also has a special metropolitan twist. The rationale for metropolitan policies and institutions rests fundamentally on a broad perspective concerning externalities. That perspective assumes the many positive and negative externalities of urban investments and action can be better managed if all of the potential areas and populations likely to feel their impact are included in the planning and decision process. Benefits can be increased if people work together, and negative impacts can be perceived and controlled if their distribution is also fully understood. Postponing or minimizing negative metropolitan and citywide impacts can be one of the big benefits of better management of the existing stock.

Understanding, and valuing, the stock in a city can also be extended to metropolitan social and cultural institutions. If we substitute the word "heritage" for stock—that which exists already—we are also able to think about the inherited "value" from the past. If we further substitute the word "capital" for stock we enter the world of "social capital" or problem-solving capacity. Cities and communities need to make better use of their social and cultural heritage as instruments to build capacity to solve problems. One example might be using the Chinese community in New York to reduce crime or improve environmental sanitation in the areas around Chinatown. Another actual case is that encouraging schools in Naples, Italy, to adopt historical monuments has motivated children there to improve the care and maintenance of these public sites.

We understand that if we do not fix the roofs on our homes, the rain will eventually damage our possessions. We are likely to enjoy those possessions longer with a repaired roof. While it is certainly more appealing to buy more possessions before fixing the roof, at some point we decide that we can no longer postpone such repairs. We should hold our public officials to an even higher standard. Their job, as guardians of the public stock, is to assure that leaky roofs, for example of public schools, are promptly repaired before new schools are built. Common sense is not expensive, except when it is ignored. ■

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Equal Opportunity?

Title IX and Intercollegiate Sports

BY JOHN WEISTART

The subtext of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 as it applies to intercollegiate sports could easily be "Bear Bryant in the age of postmodernism." Bear Bryant, the legendary coach of the powerful University of Alabama football teams of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, is remembered in faculty circles for his quick assessment of how athletics and academics should be ordered in higher education. In response to questions about how the athletic department could justify its independence from the usual regime of academic deliberations, Mr. Bryant offered that it was unlikely that 50,000 people would show up to watch an English professor give a final exam.

A central tenet of postmodern philosophy is that few immutable canons or absolutes exist. What becomes the controlling norm is greatly affected by who is given a place at the table where the norm is discussed. Title IX presents a stellar example of that perspective as it applies generally to federal law and regulation.

For virtually all the history of college sports, all the seats at the table have been occupied by men—and not a particularly broad cross section at that. For the first one hundred or more years of college sports, there were no women's sports. "College sports" meant men's sports.

Moreover, at schools where football is the important sport, to be invited to the table one had to be a believer in the primacy of football and in the unimportance of virtually everything else. At some schools, the sport that defined the athletic department's mission was basketball, but the ordering of the world was comparable.

While Title IX and its mandate of increased opportunities for women has been around for 25 years, the group at the table has not changed much. Even today, one does not become an athletic director in a substantial program without understanding that the revenue sports, which means one or both of the two dominant men's sports, come first. While this reality of football and basketball as the defining influence is most apt for the 40 or so largest programs in each sport, it is also relevant for smaller programs. Both culturally and economically, the

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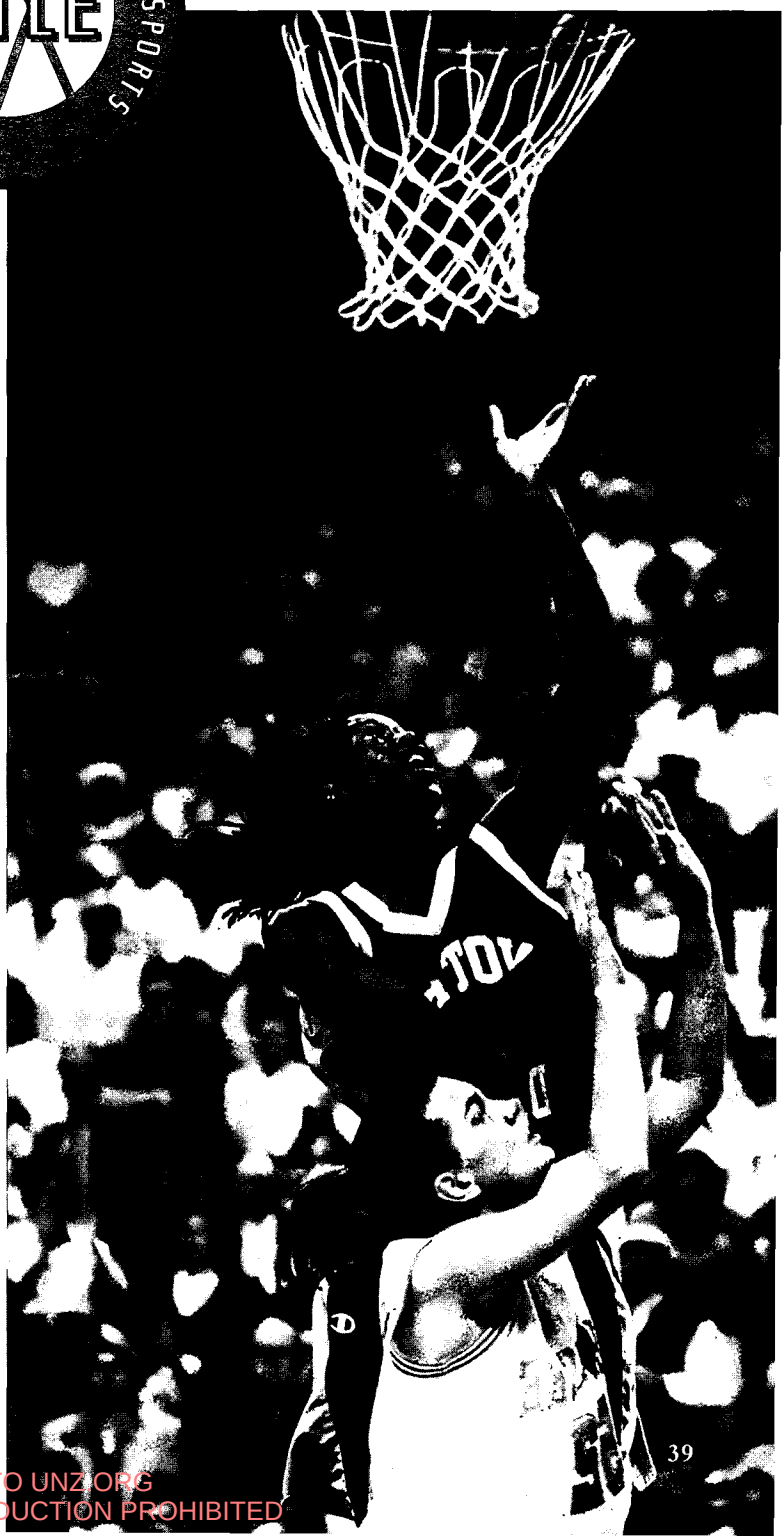

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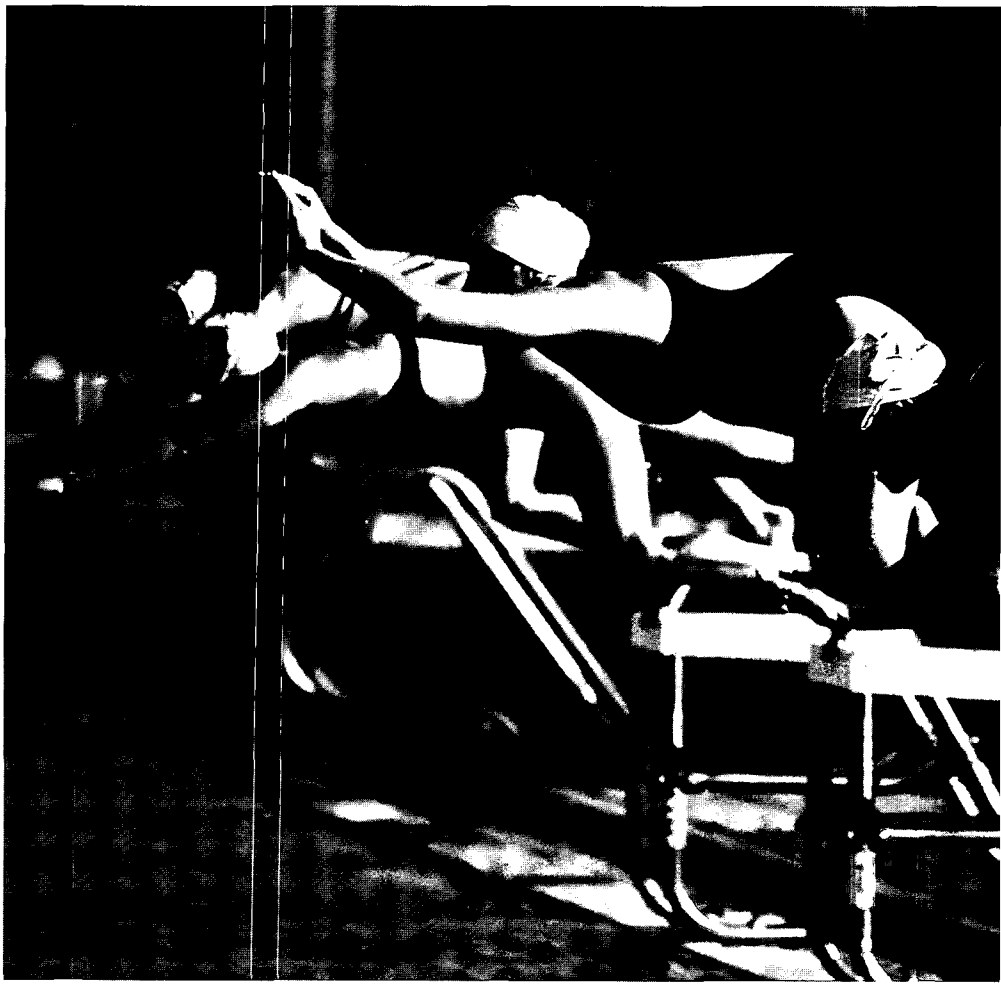
Athletic opportunities for women are far greater than they were in 1970. But the lack of compliance with Title IX is remarkable, especially given the relatively swift embrace of gender integration in college enrollment and the slower, but substantial integration of many faculties.

two men's revenue sports cast a long shadow. For example, Brown University, not a traditional sports power house, admirably sponsors more than 30 men's and women's sports. But in a recent year, 42 percent of its budget went to three men's sports—football, basketball, and ice hockey.

A Chilly Reception

As an example of the prospects of change through regulation, the reception of Title IX in college sports is notable. After 25 years, only three dozen of the top 300 programs are in compliance. Women receive less than 40 percent of athletic scholarships. Certainly athletic opportunities for women are greater than they were in 1970, when they were virtually nonexistent. But the lack of compliance with Title IX is remarkable, especially given the relatively swift embrace of gender integration in college enrollment and the slower, but substantial, integration of many faculties. Today 55 percent of undergraduate students are women, for example. In the next decade, the number is slated to rise to 60 percent.

Who is at the table does seem to make a difference. Imagine, for example, that instead of a group dedicated to preserving and protecting the football or basketball program, budgetary allocations were made by a body that included former women athletes, tuition-paying parents of young women athletes, and a representative from the Women's Studies faculty. Would women athletes traveling to away games sleep two to a bed, four to a room, while their male counterparts are given separate beds in double rooms, as has been common? Whether the 100 students on the football team should be consuming more than half of a $20 million athletic budget, which



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is typical in big-time programs, would not go unquestioned. Nor would we likely see a continuation of the pattern at smaller schools where the amount spent per player on football exceeds the amount spent per team for most women's sports.

The history of the nonimplementation of the statute has been interesting. As one early indication that change would not be easy, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the

body that serves as the universities' surrogate in making sports policy, financed a major legal challenge to the regulations adopted under the statute. Again, that strategic decision was not made at a table where women participated freely.

Present-day resistance to Title IX is notable for its rhetorical intemperance. The head of the American Football Coaches Association has described the advocates of increased opportunities for women as "the enemy" and suggested that they are "out to get" football. A common refrain from coaches in men's wrestling, swimming, and gymnastic teams, all sports that have experienced waning fortunes in recent years, is that Title IX is "promoting discrimination." From their perspective, money is being taken from the less visible men's sports to expand women's programs. The particular rhetorical flourish that rallies these groups is the declaration that present policies under Title IX are "affirmative action"—a not-so-subtle attempt to push the claims of women for recognition of their athletic aspirations into the swirl of anger that makes racial preferences such a political hot spot.

While the affirmative action characterization has gotten wide play in the sports press, it is not a particularly accurate or thoughtful one. It seems odd that a regulatory effort intended to move away from a regime that funded only men's sports would be seen as affirmative action. One wonders what "nondiscrimination" means in this male-dominated, once male-exclusive environment.

A more plausible view is the perhaps too obvious point that if the number of people laying claims to athletic department funds grows significantly and if the total amount of money spent on athletics does not also grow—as it should not in a world of higher education in which legislatures have been cutting support for libraries, salaries, and educational facilities—then even under the most nondiscriminatory allocation of funds, traditional men's sports will not be as lavishly supported as they were when they were the only sports to support. Thus, the rhetoric of the complaint seems much stronger than its substance.

The Best Teams Money Can Buy?

To see how college sports are locked into a budgetary structure that favors the two dominant men's sports and almost certainly ensures excess in their funding, let's again focus on the 40 or so big-time programs. Such athletic departments really run two distinct sports operations, one that is nonprofit and nonprofitable, the other a highly commercialized venture thrown into the rough-and-tumble world of broadcasting, Nielson ratings, and sponsorships. The former concerns itself with nonrevenue sports, the latter, top-echelon football and basketball.

The key insight into the economic structure of college sports at this level is that the potential spending for the two commercialized men's sports has no predefined restraint. These sports will consume whatever funds are available. Moreover, many of those at the football-promoting table doubt their ultimate control over costs. Spending levels are often seen as what competitors are willing to spend to claw out a position near the top of the sports pyramid.

Big-time athletic programs find themselves in a position that is quite unusual and quite isolating in the general noncommercial thinking that drives the best of higher education. The economic reality for the athletic department is that if it wants to be competitive in the commercialized college sports scene, it must join what Berkeley sociologist Harry Edwards calls the athletics arms race.

In football and basketball, but not in lacrosse or crew, the school that spends the most wins the most, and the school that wins the most has the most to spend. If a competitor builds a lavish state-of-the-art weight room and hires an array of strength coaches, the home team is instantaneously at a disadvantage. It has lost an edge in its ability to recruit the most exquisite talent, the talent that will ensure lucrative television contracts and ample post-season receipts.

For those at the budgetary table, then, the trick is to spend as little money as possible on the nonrevenue sports to ensure maximum resources for the large and competitor-driven appetites of the football and basketball programs. One recent study found that for every new dollar spent on sports at big-time schools, only 5 to 7 cents went to nonrevenue sports.

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Hence the problem. Title IX supports further expenditures on non-revenue-producing sports—exactly the sort of expenditures that athletic departments do not seek out and do not want to make. And heaven forbid that a program moves willingly and generously toward the goal of equitable opportunities for women. Such a move is economic suicide.

Thus the rhetorical lashes delivered at Title IX and the courts that enforce it are, in essence, a plea that the traditional ways of doing business cannot be upset.

As an exercise in regulation, Title IX is thus quite a challenge. Given who is at the table and given the raw economics of the structure they have chosen to embrace, it is naive to assume that increased athletic opportunities for women will quietly and enthusiastically be added to the larger goals of the athletic department. Today's low level of compliance with Title IX underscores the point. The desire for greater gender equity is the classic case in which regulation, and perhaps regulation that is more than gentle nudging, is necessary if a larger objective is to be achieved.

Getting It Right

The rather mean-spirited rhetoric that frames much of the criticism of Title IX is usually followed by the suggestion that the U.S. Department of Education has done a bad job in translating the general goal of the statute into workable regulatory rules. There is, though, another view. And this is that while change might not be welcome, as a vehicle for turning the ship of college sports, the present Title IX regulations may have gotten it just about right.

The first issue undertaken by the regulations is the matter of "how do we tell?" How do we tell whether a school is providing enough athletic opportunities for women? The regulations, in effect, specify three alternatives through which a school can show that it is being fair in allocating chances to compete between men and women.

The first test is a safe harbor. If the school can show that the percentage of its athletes who are women is substantially proportionate to the percentage of women in its student body, it is in compliance. (There is a separate question as to whether the women's endeavors are being adequately funded, but that is secondary to the issue of providing sufficient opportunities.)

If there is not substantial proportionality, then the school is allowed to show, under the second alternative, that it has engaged in adequately planning and, in a meaningful sense, is on its way to providing sufficient opportunities for women. The third path to compliance is a showing that the school is meeting the actual level of athletic interest among its women. Thus, even if the level of participation by women is less than "substantially proportionate" to their presence in the student body, such a result is acceptable if all of the potential for women's sports is satisfied.

The common litany from the football table is that the seeming flexibility of the three-part approach is phony: there is really only one test—the government simply counts noses to see if there is "substantial proportionality." It is alleged that planning under the second test is accepted only if it is planning for substantial proportionality. And the third test evaporates because there is no recognized mechanism for establishing that actual interest is less than a proportionate interest.

There is, though, a great deal more sensitivity in the regulations than critics are willing to credit.

In fact, the existing regulations are quite deferential to self-determination by college athletic departments. Note what the regulations do not do. They do not, for example, order that the occupants of the chairs around the table be deposed. If one wanted a timely and temperate response to Title IX, changing the guest list probably would have been the quickest route to that end. But the regulations defer; the decisionmakers aren't changed.

Nor do the regulations order an equal expenditure of dollars; not all sports need be funded equally. Nor is there a regulatory standard that second guesses individual decisions that a school's coaches and athletic administrators make. There is no general test of "reasonableness" or "consistent good-faith compliance," both plausible measures, but standards that would interject the government deep into the conference room at the field house.

Rather, the approach of the regulations is that schools will be judged by their results. How a school gets to those results, how it adjusts the gender-antagonistic incentives in the historical budgetary structure is up to the school. Again, among regulatory options, this is hardly heavy-handed, picky, or oppressive.

Properly interpreted, "substantial proportionality" is simply the guideline that ensures that a football-protecting school does not begin from a position of naysaying and false pessimism. A healthy premise of the substantial proportionality test is that as a society, we really have very little idea how women's sports will evolve, which will be popular, and by what measure.

Locker rooms are now populated with many men who are highly confident that they know otherwise. As one observer in the *Los Angeles Times* reported, "It is unrealistic to believe that under any circumstances the number of women interested in participating in a sports program in high school or college will ever approach the percentage of males that are doing so."

To their drafters' credit, the existing regulations do not try to answer what women's sports will look like in 40 years. Rather, they reflect the significant insight that the potential for women's sports is so unexplored that there can be no hard and fast game plan for reform.

What would have been the response in the locker room in 1965 if someone had asserted, "In the future, at some major schools—

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Stanford, Colorado, perhaps—women's basketball will attract more fans than men's basketball"? Or, "There will be women playing competitive ice hockey in college." Or, "The number of women playing collegiate soccer will go from virtually zero to 8,000 in less than 25 years." These statements would have been met with moans, hoots, and towel-snaps. But all the predictions have proven true. It seems quite correct that the Title IX regulations not anoint a "conventional wisdom" with legal status.

But what if, when much more is said and done, it turns out that the degree of interest in women's sports on a particular campus is less than "substantially proportionate" to the representation of women in the general student body? The current regulations accept that possibility and fully authorize that the number of women's offerings be limited. The third test for compliance clearly contemplates that there can be downward adjustments in offerings based on a lack of interest.

What the regulations properly do not allow is for an athletic department to announce that "women aren't interested." Nor should the regulations be taken to authorize a school to survey its women students to establish a lack of interest. On that point, a magnificent insight emerged from the initial opinion of the federal Court of Appeals in the 1993 Brown University case: such a survey does little more than measure the effects of prior discrimination against women. Showing whether women "want" more athletic opportunities is going to require a slower and more nurturing process.

Yes, there may be women's offerings that are less than substantially proportionate, but the justification for that outcome must be based on experience, including long-term trial and error. What is not given weight is surmise, especially a surmise offered by decisionmakers who are under great pressure to prefer an unfavorable forecast.

A Spending Ceiling on Big-Time Sports

The divisive rhetoric and rear-guard actions against Title IX have delayed a more balanced discussion of how to move college sports toward gender equity. The problem that athletic decisionmakers confront is fairly obvious: the unrestrained appetites of football and basketball leave precious little money for other sports. The question that needs to be most thoughtfully pursued is how to devise an alternative to the present model that causes the least disruption to men's offerings. One choice rather obviously presents itself.

Big-time college sports now operate under a number of NCAA-mandated partial caps on expenses, the most important of which is that no wages can be paid to the players. A plausible next step is a comprehensive cap, a prescribed ceiling on expenditures in football and basketball.

The benefits of such a control are both literally and figuratively untold. A cap frees up money that can be used for other purposes. Not only will Title IX compliance now be easy at most schools, but athletics may actually come to support the school's education venture rather than detract from it.

And because of the curious twists in sports economics, the final athletic product might actually be improved. With the top restrained, as it is in many professional sports leagues, the number of teams that are "competitive" would increase. The contest for who is best would greatly intensify, resulting in more consumer interest.

At the bottom line, the regulations under Title IX require that the interest in women's sports should not be declared weak before it is fully born. We truly don't know what we have in women's sports; we are only now starting to find out. Title IX says no more than that women's sports should be allowed a period of adequately funded experimentation and exploration. The topic very squarely on the table is whether the athletic department's response will continue to be resistance and litigation or a more productive rethinking of what lies ahead for college sports in the 21st century. Perhaps a change in the guest list is warranted. ■

The topic very squarely on the table is whether the athletic department's response will continue to be resistance and litigation or a more productive rethinking of what lies ahead for college sports in the 21st century.

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The Intromissibility of a Paretian Athletic Director

BY LOUIS M. GUENIN

The intercollegiate teams of a college comprise about 500 players. Most other students who enjoy participating in athletics gain satisfaction through intramural and recreational programs. Varsities have recently provoked something of a commotion. It has been alleged that in fielding varsities, most colleges discriminate "on the basis of sex" in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This sweeping claim is the outcropping of an interpretation lying several layers below in a strata of government regulation. Atop the outcropping has grown a conversational tangle. My purpose here is to expose the weaknesses in those strata and to suggest several interesting considerations about efficient resource allocation, local justice, and social choice that the tangle has hidden. These considerations point the way to a consensus view of equal opportunity.

Biography of a Fallacy

For an understanding of equal opportunity in athletics—a topic on which, contrary to popular impression, Title IX is silent—the Department of Education's interpretive apparatus has cranked slowly. After a quarter century, the entire output thereof collapses to a single precept (hereafter "Q"): if the ratio of its male to female varsity athletes does not equal the ratio of its male to female undergraduates, a college perpe-

Louis M. Guenin is lecturer on ethics at the Harvard Medical School. His work related to this essay includes "Distributive Justice in Competitive Access to Intercollegiate Athletic Teams Segregated by Sex," Studies in Philosophy and Education *(October 1997), and "Affirmative Action in Higher Education as Redistribution,"* Public Affairs Quarterly *(April 1997).*

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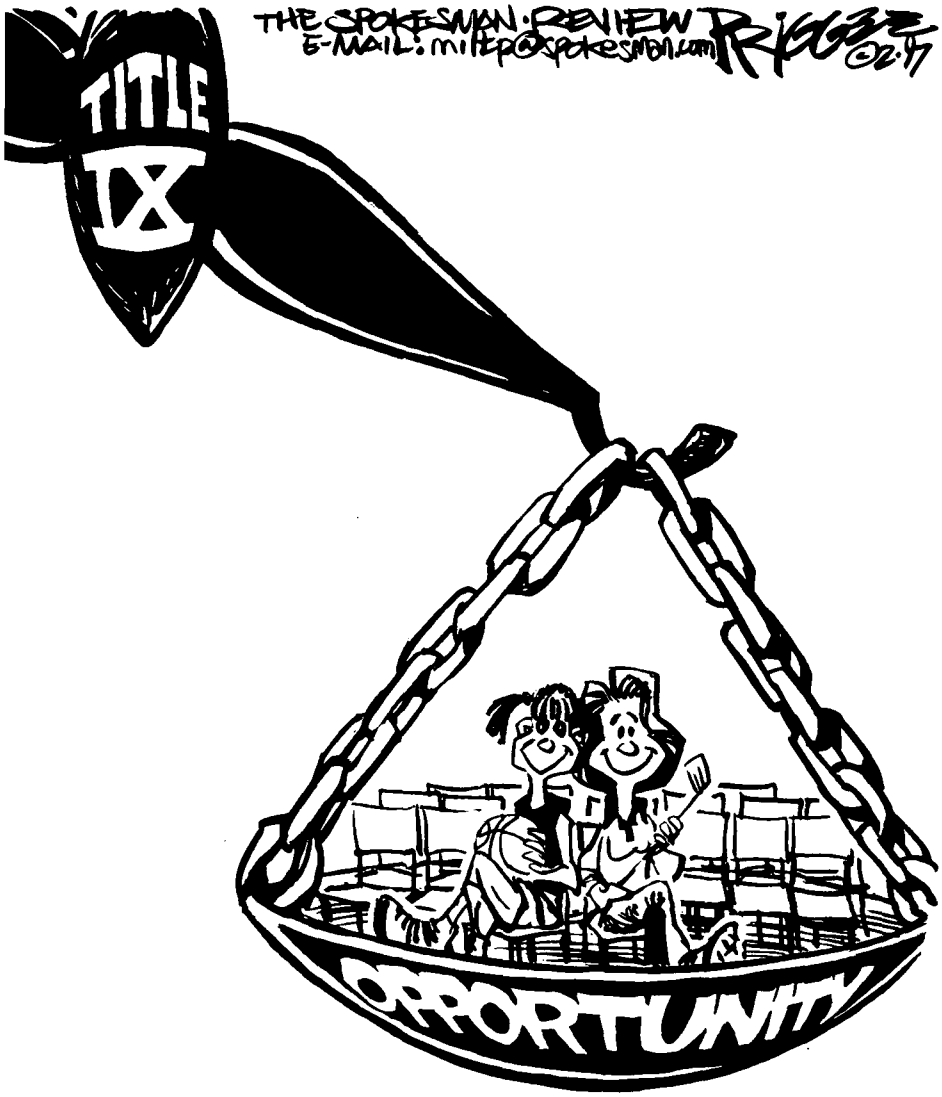
trates sex discrimination. Q assigns to the members of each sex taken as a whole a quota of varsity spots equal to that sex's proportion of the student body.

The relevant 1979 agency policy begins with three purported indicia of discrimination—whether the sex ratios of athletes and students are equal, whether that not obtaining, there occurs continuous expansion of women's athletics, and whether, both of the foregoing not obtaining, there is met every athletic interest of female students. In the policy, the agency does not in fact state whether equality of sex ratios is good or bad. In 1979 many colleges were predominantly male. Equality of the sex ratios could then have masked—as indeed it may still—discrimination against women. Today at least the impact of the policy is clear: it effectively mandates Q. This follows because the second two indicia are seldom attainable. The drafters did not anticipate the circumstance in which continual expansion is infeasible for colleges already offering every practicable women's sport. Nor did they recognize that the largesse of the third condition would work discrimination against men unless an athletic program met men's every interest, an infeasible feat from the start. Criticized for the Procrustean bed onto which it has forced the concept of equal opportunity, the agency has rejoined approvingly that two-thirds of some set of investigated colleges satisfies the third condition. This response neglects whatever discrimination against males is thereby condoned and omits mention of the pressure exerted by the agency to comply with Q.



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It seems that Q is the stepchild of coincidence. On the one hand, the agency's policy is the work of its prosecutorial Office of Civil Rights, which struggled to interpret distributively the notion of "equal athletic opportunity" broached in a 1975 agency regulation. Prosecutors may be adroit at pursuing procedural injustices but are unlikely authors of subtle methods for allocating scarce resources. On the other hand, college athletic directors, for whom it is possible to overestimate the fascination of the *Federal Register*, were not quick to espy the policy. When plaintiffs first brought private suits, the policy was the only governmental interpretation extant. Despite (or because of) its subsequent notoriety, the policy has never been proposed as a federal regulation.

It is easy to see that Q defies logic and its legal superiors.

Q deploys the inference that if objectionable discrimination entails disproportionate participation (which is doubtless true), then whenever disproportionate participation occurs, objectionable discrimination occurs. This is the fallacy of affirming the consequent. Q finds sex discrimination (for example, against men in theatre and dance) when innocent explanations for disproportionate participation (for example, interests and repertoire) are obvious.

Since 1977 the Supreme Court has rejected inferences of discrimination predicated on comparing some subset's representation in a set of beneficiaries with the subset's representation in a set larger than the set of actual applicants. Q is such an inference, as it references not the set of varsity aspirants but the set of undergraduates. An explicit proviso to Title IX also rejects any quota predicated upon the rejected form of inference. That is to say nothing of the disapproving

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view of quotas in *Bakke v. Regents of the University of California* (1978).

Because more males than females aspire to varsity play, Q assures spots for a greater proportion of interested women than men. Colleges operating under Q present an artificially higher female than male supply function and thereby set a lower percentile requirement, in sex-relative athletic talent, to qualify for a women's *vis-à-vis* a men's team. Title IX proscribes preferential treatment of either sex. In a 1979 law review article, Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg observed that it would be anomalous to apply any different standard to a sex-based than to a race-based preference. Insofar as the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits denial to any person of "the equal protection of the laws," race is seldom considered to be a characteristic by which government may treat persons differently. In *Adarand v. Pena* (1995), the Court held that strict scrutiny should be given race-based preferences even if "benign." By Justice Ginsburg's majority opinion in *U. S. v. Virginia* (1996), the Court similarly ruled that government action in which persons are treated differently according to sex will deny equal protection unless the action bears an "exceedingly persuasive justification." At minimum, that requires that the end constitute an "important governmental objective." Q resoundingly fails to satisfy this criterion as Q contravenes Title IX's ban on sex discrimination and antiquota proviso.

An occasional report has suggested a judicial consensus upholding Q. To the contrary, seven of twelve federal appellate courts have never ruled on Title IX and athletics. In none of four appellate cases other than *Cohen v. Brown University* (1st Cir. 1996) in which the subject surfaced in various guises (all during 1993–94) did a court systematically explore whether the agency policy is valid. In affirming a judgment against Brown for violating Q, the First Circuit majority's principal ground was that the court could not revisit whether the agency policy was valid because a different panel of the court had recognized the policy earlier in the case. The panel accorded that recognition in 1993 while indulging the presumption that equal proportions of men and women desire varsity play. Later this presumption collapsed when national and local studies consistently revealed roughly twice as many male as female varsity aspirants. Binding only in New England, *Brown* is unpersuasive elsewhere by dint of a now discredited presumption.

Every major athletic conference falls within the territory of the federal appellate circuits whose precedents foretell invalidation of Q or that have yet to consider it. The Ninth Circuit, following *Adarand* and *Virginia*, recently invalidated a statute conferring preferences by race and sex in construction contracts. It later validated a California constitutional amendment proscribing such preferences by public entities, an amendment that the court described as effectively an exegesis of the equal protection clause. Following *Adarand*, the Fifth Circuit in *Hopwood v. Texas* (1996) declared that racial preferences in admissions, though allegedly benign, deny equal protection. Given *Virginia*, it could scarcely reach a different conclusion about Q. (Notwithstanding *Hopwood*, the agency advised Texas officials that state institutions may consider race in admissions. An unfortunate unreliability in legal interpretation was confirmed when such advice was contradicted by the solicitor general.) The most recent trial court decision rejects *Brown* and disposes of Q, finding Q neither necessary nor sufficient to refute a charge of discrimination. Judge Rebecca Doherty observed in *Pederson v. Louisiana State University* (1996) that one must assume variation in interests. Q also contravenes the 1975 regulation's direction that colleges heed student interests. Q is ripe for invalidation in future suits by or against colleges.

Distortions

The former Soviet Union amused Western observers with inartful factory quotas. When a ministry prescribed output of nails in pounds per period, some factories produced small quantities of huge nails. The similarly artificial impress of Q is a universe of athletic teams uncorrelated with student interests. Ignoring demand, Q requires, at a typical college whose enrollment is half male and half female, that women constitute half the varsity complement. Inasmuch as a football team alone will comprise more than 100 players, women will usually not occupy half the varsity spots even after a college fields virtually every women's team desired. Most colleges have striven to meet Q, adding women's teams to the point that access to them is barely competitive. Meanwhile varsity spots are available for only a small proportion of the men who would like one. In service of Q, many men's teams are being curtailed or terminated.

Because of demand for them, an athletic department is not likely to halve its men's opportunities. Instead most will add many more spots for women than they eliminate for men. Inflation and keeping pace with rivals contribute to greater expenditures on athletics, but the financial impact of Q and the concomitant bow to commercial intrusions are unmistakable. Pressures from operating roughly twice as many teams as heretofore have induced athletic departments not only to consume more internal funds but to cloak themselves in commercial advertising. It may be argued that, at the government's behest, colleges must value intercollegiate *vis-à-vis* intramural athletics differently than they otherwise would.

Efficiency and Equal Opportunity

As furnished by or within a voluntary organization with a specified number of paying members, a public good known as a *club good* is characterized by (a) excludability and (b) partial nonrivalry (congestibility). For example, by selecting members and imposing fees, a golf course restricts access, and, up to the point when crowding

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occurs, an additional golfer's play does not diminish another's. A college may be viewed as a heterogeneous intergenerational multiproduct club receiving subsidies from taxpayers and grantors and providing many club goods to its tuition-paying student members. Like a publicly supported symphony orchestra, a varsity furnishes the means for exceptional players to perform, others to attend its performances, and still others to gain altruistic satisfaction or bask in its reflected glory. Financing derives from entertainment revenue, tuition, and subsidies. For these one or more club goods, the means of exclusion vary among tryouts, gate attendants, and remoteness. To control congestion, tolls are imposed in the form of talent thresholds and ticket prices. Congestion ranges from considerable, as when only recruits play or the arena is full, to nil, as when a women's roster is incomplete or seats are empty.

An allocation x of resources is efficient or "Pareto optimal" if and only if there is no other allocation of which it can be said that at least one person prefers the other and everybody either prefers the other or is indifferent between x and the other. Pareto optimality in turn requires that a public good g be supplied up to the point that the marginal cost of g, relative to other goods, reaches the sum, for all persons, of their marginal willingness to pay for g (equal to the quotient of the marginal utility of g and the marginal utility of other goods). By equations taking account of congestion, one can determine optimal club good provision, membership size, and tolls. But of course Q does not allow a Paretian athletic director to operate.

Nonetheless let us consider what might be done with Q dislodged. Let us assume that a college fields any profitable team. Such a team is effectively funded at the gate and by rights fees; its profits subsidize others. Students contribute to a club good whatever shares of a lump sum athletic fee or tuition are directed to it. However we characterize a team that vies for subsidy, we encounter difficulty in ascertaining how much individuals are willing to pay for any public good. One could ask by survey, "What aliquot fee would you be willing to pay or absorb to field a team in the sport of a?" Knowing that they can obtain a free ride on others' contributions, some may seek to minimize their aliquot share of cost by understating their willingness to pay. If they do not expect to be billed according to their response, others who desire some good may overstate their willingness to pay. Still others may struggle to quantify their views. A device called the Clarke-Groves mechanism induces truthfulness by adjusting aliquot fees so as to tax those who respond untruthfully about willingness to pay. Though ingenious, the device fails to assure Pareto optimality because it may raise more revenue than needed and, lest incentives against truthfulness arise from the prospect of sharing in an excess, an excess cannot be returned. Related research has borne fruit in mechanisms to render truthfulness a dominant strategy, in the design of surveys, and in results about what is "second best" to Pareto optimality.

Teams award varsity spots as they recruit and conduct tryouts. An account of fairness in selection would rehearse precepts familiar from college

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admissions. We are spared that exercise in detail because a coach's selections, even in our litigious society, are seldom contested. But in general we may insist on impartial consideration. That is not to deny that on occasion, as in defending affirmative action, one may argue that selection is not deserved, that impartial consideration should give way to other goals. By almost any account of equal athletic opportunity for sexes known to differ in athletic ability, one implicitly sets different performance standards for selection by sex. Nevertheless, in allotting varsity spots—presumably using an account of equal opportunity to select from among the multitude of Pareto optima—we may insist on roughly equal selectivity. A college might offer subsidized varsity spots so that, given demand, the minimum sex-relative percentile in ability necessary to qualify for a women's team approximates that required to join a men's. Lacking measures of ability, a benchmark might be competitive access, the number of roster positions on subsidized varsities divided by the number of aspirants to subsidized varsities, computed separately by sex. Another survey question might be "Assuming equal competitive access for men and women, what number of varsity spots, if any, would you shift between the extant men's and women's programs?"

An athletic director could also conduct a purely ordinal survey in which students might rank men's athletics, women's athletics, and other uses for an athletics subsidy. (The results could be rendered single-caved and compilable notwithstanding Arrow's theorem by stipulating that "other" may not be voted first, by allowing no ties on the ballots, and if the number of voters should be even, by discarding a random ballot.) Or there could be presented for approval voting a number of triples presenting different allotments for those three alternatives. For an extant team, one would not overlook the obvious, the turnout for the team and in intramurals.

By a local-justice analogue of a principle formulated by John Rawls, one way to select among Pareto optima is to permit only those inequalities beneficial to the overall welfare, as viewed by a majority of its members, of the relevant social position that the inequality disfavors. Majorities of men and women may analyze no differently the importance of demand. An agency regulation requires that men's and women's housing be apportioned to demand, but inexplicably does not so provide for athletics. Rather than undergraduate women importuning more teams, one more often hears lawyers who, remote from any campus and dependent for a livelihood on Title IX disputes, complain of participation ratios. At a given college, a majority of women may prefer to trade an increased athletics budget for better housing, improved laboratory facilities, or lower tuition. In such cases, the status quo is not Pareto optimal.

Some suggest that if only a college were to reduce its football program, it might tolerate *Q*. Football rosters have already been pared—to the extent that, given risk of injury, teams now scrimmage less frequently and must play freshmen. Expense reductions risk a disproportionate effect: were a savings to sacrifice advantage in recruiting or preparation and a self-sustaining team were to lose another game per season, appear less often on television, or receive a less desirable bowl placement, the revenue loss could dwarf the savings, thereby hurting all subsidized teams. Tennis teams traveling by van have long understood why football teams travel by chartered plane. By accidents of the entertainment market, profitable teams exemplify inequalities justifiable by the Rawlsian analogue noted above.

The theory of club goods accommodates the fact that some clubs pay members to join. For a major athletic program, athletic scholarships sound in the millions of dollars. An agency regulation mandates equality of female and male scholarship expenditures per athlete. Recently it has been argued that NCAA maxima by sport allow more full scholarships in the aggregate for men than for women and thereby drive expenditures per female athlete below those per male. This conjures a false conflict. For allocative fairness, the relevant quantity for comparison is *subsidized* expense per athlete. Profitable teams do not draw from, but augment, the subsidy pie. Just this view was adopted in interpreting an antidiscrimination law in a 1987 decision by the Supreme Court of Washington. The villain in any dilution of expenditures per female athlete is *Q*. Under *Q*'s artificial impress, because of the ineluctably large size of a football roster more women's teams must be contrived even if demand for them is lean or exhausted.

Colleges embed many other inequalities traceable to external influences. Professors of physics are often paid less than professors of law, but not, it seems safe to say, because it is thought that lawyers are smarter and more deserving. In recently clarifying its view of what would constitute sex discrimination in the salaries of male and female coaches, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission affirmed the appropriateness of paying higher salaries to coaches of teams that relative to others produce more revenue (even if they are not self-sustaining), generate "greater spectator attendance and media demands," or comprise more athletes and assistant coaches. The EEOC also adumbrated the idea that one team's revenue production may be less than another's because the former has been slighted in its expense budget. But it acknowledged that "many variables" of the entertainment market "are not within an institution's direct control." In the United States, only three college sports (football, basketball, and hockey) draw significant audiences.

Within the faculties of colleges and universities, society's font of ideas on justice and efficiency, reposes the expertise to guide a Paretian athletic director. All that seems lacking is the freedom to operate. ■

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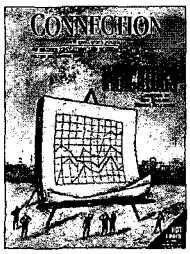

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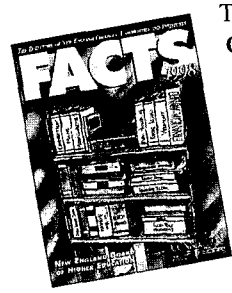

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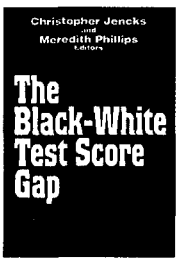

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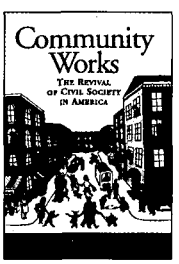

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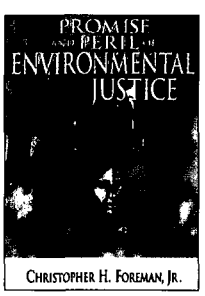

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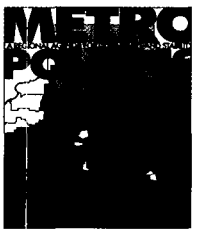

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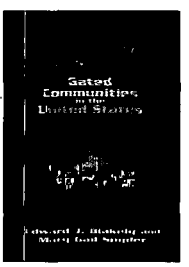

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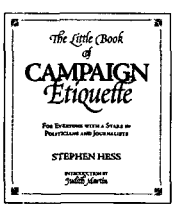

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